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JOHN COAKLEY LETTSOM

AND THE FOUNDATION OF
THE MEDICAL SOCIETY.

BEING THE
PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS
DELIVERED BEFORE
THE MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON
ON
October 8th, 1917,

BY
SIR STCLAIR THOMSON,
M.D., F.R.C.P. LOND., F.R.C.S. ENG.



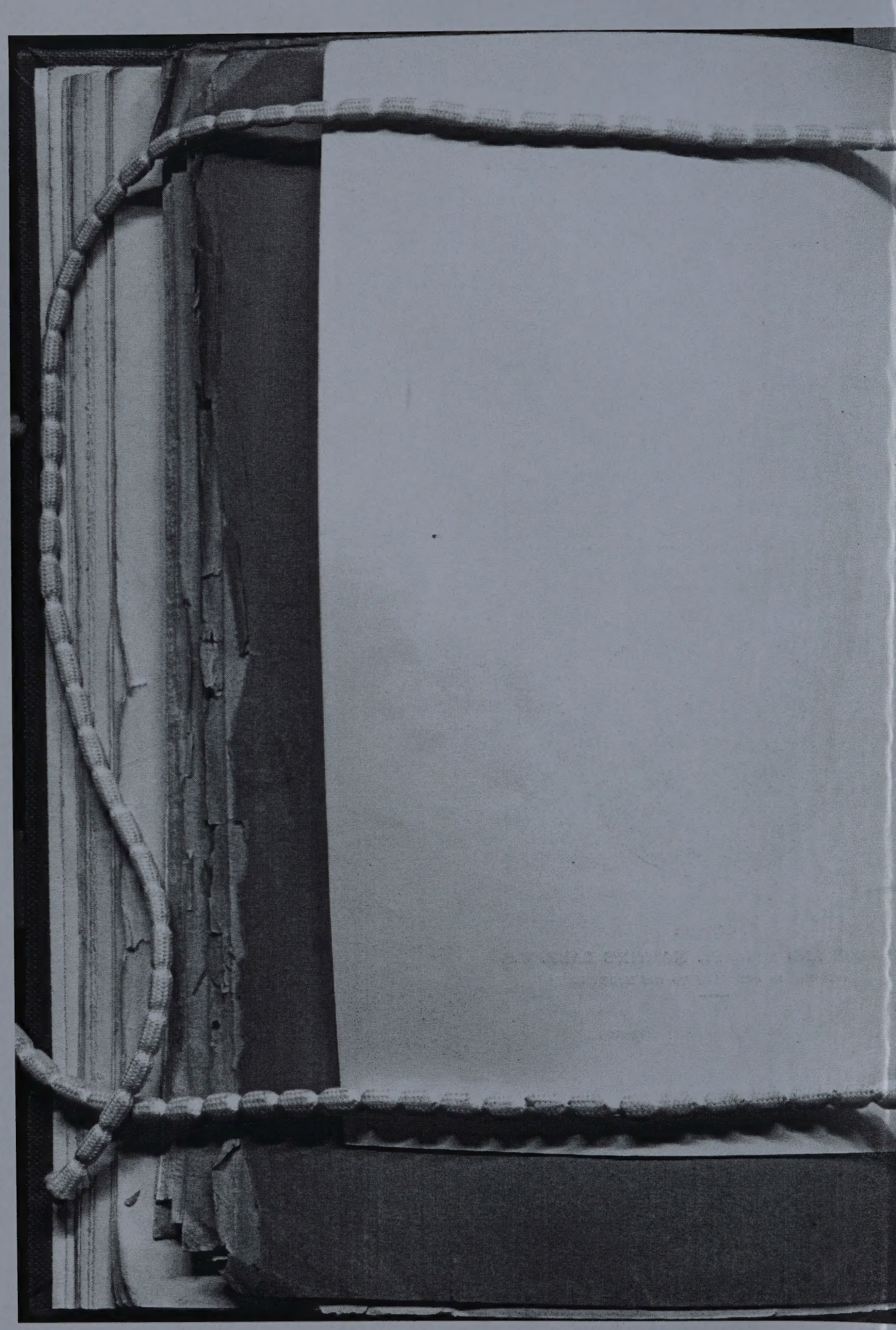
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INTRODUCTION.

FELLOWS OF THE MEDICAL SOCIETY AND VISITORS,—Some one has said that there are two happy periods in the life of a President; the first being when he assumes the dignity of the Chair, and the second when he resigns the cares of office. Personally, I feel that fate will cheat me of both these moments, for I am sure that with the kind and efficient help of the Secretaries and Registrar, and the wise and loyal guidance of the Council, we will have such a successful session that I will part with the Presidency with regret. As to the promised happy moment of this evening, I view it with dismay. Many distinguished Presidents have occupied this office since the foundation of the Society in 1773. In addition to the well-known names of physicians, surgeons, and gynaecologists inscribed on our walls, I notice those of colleagues who have devoted themselves to nervous and mental diseases, while in Erasmus Wilson in 1878, Brudenell Carter in 1886, and William Dalby in 1894, the specialities of dermatology, ophthalmology and otology have been recognised. I feel that the honour of being elected to this honourable and responsible office has fallen to my lot as a repre-

sentative of laryngology, a comparatively young speciality and for a long time the Cinderella of the sisterhood. On behalf of my co-workers in this department of practice I heartily thank the Society for this first recognition, and I deeply appreciate my good fortune in receiving the highest honour which can be bestowed by one's Fellows in this, the oldest of the Medical Societies of London.

I naturally turned to our Rules, the history of our Foundation, and the life of our Founder to guide me in the act of presiding. The outstanding personality of the Medical Society is, and always must be, John Coakley Lettsom. I have found the records of his life so interesting that I trust I may be forgiven if I occupy part of this evening in trying to convey the impression I obtained of him during my researches into the duties of the office of President.

LETTSON'S EARLY LIFE.

John Coakley Lettsom was born in 1744 and died in 1815. He was one of the seven twins of his parents, and he and his brother—the seventh pair—alone survived infancy. The following sketch of his career may be more interesting if we recollect that he had no great social or family influence, that he never attended any noted school or had a regular university course, that he was not a Fellow of the College of Physicians, that he never held any Court appointment and was not on the staff of any well-known London Hospital. He may have had his good turns of fortune, but he had few advantages in his birth, education and up-bringing, and the success of his evidently healthful, happy, vigorous and useful career was due almost entirely to his own application, his keenness in his profession, his love of humanity, the breadth of his interests, his zest for life, and his happy disposition. He was born in the West Indies and may have had some French blood in his veins, for he refers in a letter to the suggestion, without denying it, that he had the “volatility of the Creole with the plodding industry of the German.” (Fig. 2.) He had no sister and, as he was sent to England at the early age of six, we cannot claim much home influence in forming his character. He never saw his father again. He was sent to a small school of forty or sixty boys at Penketh, in Lancashire, kept by a member of the Society of Friends, for Coakley belonged to a Quaker family and he lies buried in the Friends' Burial Ground, Little Coleman Street (now re-named

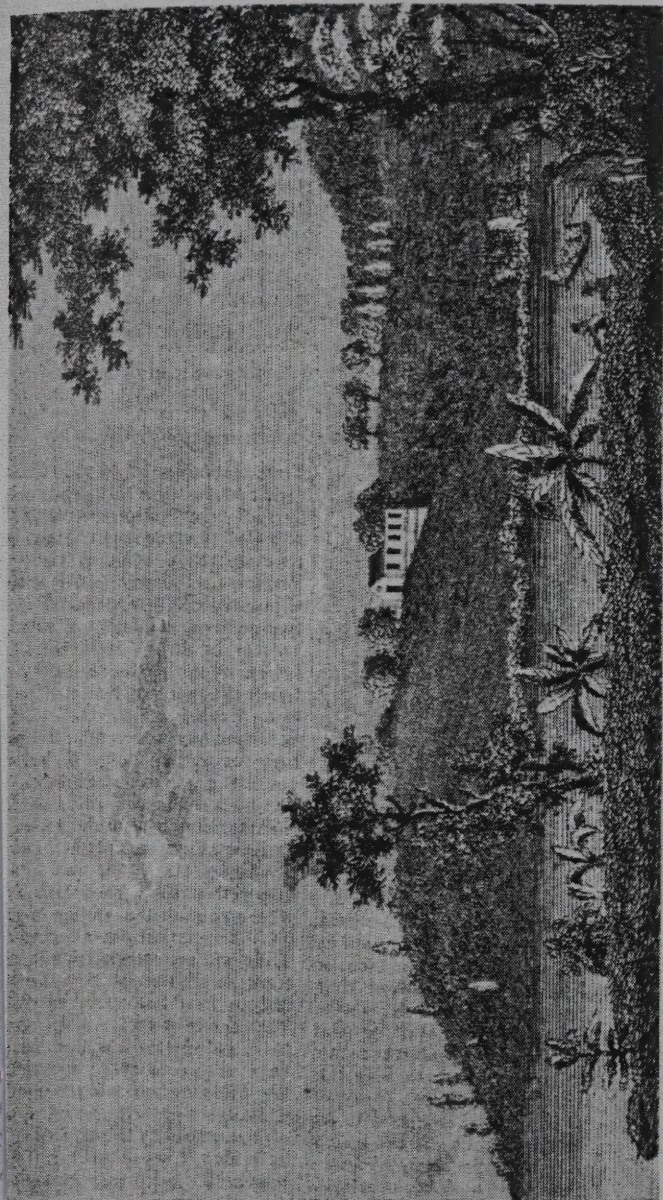


FIG. 2.—Scene in the Island of Little Van Dycke, near Tortola, with the house in which Dr. Lettsom was born.

Rosee Street), Bunhill Row. While at this school, he came under the influence of the well-known Quaker minister, Samuel Fothergill, of Warrington, the younger brother of the celebrated Dr. John Fothergill, of London, and from this more or less accidental acquaintance, we can trace an influence on the career of Lettson and the origin of our own Fothergillian Gold Medal. At this small day-school Lettson only remained until the age of 14, and during this time, if he learned small Latin and less Greek, he had the much greater advantage of acquiring a knowledge and love of nature by being allowed and encouraged to join in the usual country sports of school boys of a former generation. Following the hounds on foot, sometimes assisted by pole-jumping; bathing and swimming; the use of bow and arrow; fishing, sliding, and long days spent in nutting or bird-nesting, not only helped to form a vigorous and active constitution, but gave a keenness in observation, a resourcefulness in emergencies, a quickness of eye, and a love of fellowship with nature, which the present generation runs the risk of losing with its exaggeration of formal games confined within monotonous playing grounds. The healthiness of the school is testified to by the fact that during the forty years that this school was under the head-mastership of Lettson's teacher, only one death occurred in the school. American visitors this evening will be interested to hear that this was the case of Springett Penn, the son and heir of the Penns of Pennsylvania, and it was said that he was in a consumptive state when he entered the school.

A MEDICAL APPRENTICE.

Lettson's education finished in his 14th year. His father was dead, and his mother in the far West Indies had married again. He was then sent to Liverpool for a business training, but, at the end of a year, circumstances arose which resulted in his being apprenticed as a pupil to Abraham Sutcliff, a surgeon and apothecary at Settle in Yorkshire. If the school in Lancashire helped in the promotion of Lettson's physical vigour and powers of observation, it is to his five years' residence in Yorkshire that we may ascribe the opportunity for the acquisition of a love of learning, much book lore, habits of work, training of memory, and the faculty of managing patients. His master, Sutcliff, was an excellent classical scholar, though quite self-taught.

and under his guidance he made such progress in Latin that he was able to study in that language the works of Boerhaave, Winslow, and others. We should remember that in the 18th century Latin was still a living language, for Lettsom, like all physicians of the time, could follow lectures in it at foreign universities, discuss medical matters with colleagues of various countries in Latin, and, by its medium, submit himself for a diploma at Leyden. He records that he "attended the Lectures of Innes, Sinclair, Plummer, and Rutherford in that language (*i.e.* Latin), in which I was pretty well qualified to maintain a conversation or dispute" (Letter 15, July 17th, 1783). With a party of friends he shared the expense of procuring a French master from London, so that he not only could read the language with ease, but could speak and write it fairly well. He obtained a few Greek books, and acquired a little knowledge of that language. This must have been a vastly superior education to the fragmentary knowledge of disjointed grammar of mispronounced Latin, which nowadays takes up so many years of an English boy's life and results in such appalling ignorance both of it and of his own tongue.

While at Settle his favourite study was botany, and thus he laid the foundation for much of his delight in after years in his weekends at his country house at Camberwell. Lettsom early realised that he had not a good memory, and in his 18th year he started the habit of careful note-taking and the construction of tables. "Thus," as his biographer, Pettigrew, records, "with moderate powers of mind, he was able to supply by industry and art what nature had denied him."

We have no record of his purely professional training during these years, from 15 to 20, when he was apprenticed to a country apothecary and surgeon. But I have myself been articled as a "medical pupil" in a provincial town, and am therefore probably amongst the last survivors of a now extinct stage in medical education. Anyhow, it helps me to imagine what many of Lettsom's duties were. Each morning he would have to fill up the stock of mixtures in the surgery, give an eye to the leeches, and inscribe in a large round hand *Die Solis*, or *Die Jovis*, or the other daily heading in the Day Book. When his master had started in his gig on the morning round, the pupil might have to see and prescribe for a string of club patients, the inspection of the tongue and the feeling of the pulse being the only methods

of physical examination employed. Later in the day he might be sent round to visit the chronic cases, change dressings, vaccinate, or even to see how a confinement case was getting on. I attended my first midwifery case at the age of 17, and, while still a medical pupil, I had learned to apply the forceps and perform intra-uterine version. Much of the afternoon would be occupied in dispensing for the cases his employer had seen during the morning, and no small part of this art would be the neatness and skill with which labels were written out and gummed on, corks were securely inserted, and bottles were wrapped in clean white paper, sealed and addressed. The training this gave in method, order, cleanliness, certainty, and despatch is not to be despised, while the pupil acquired a direct demonstration of the appearance, smell and taste of various mixtures, the size of pills, and the incompatibility of drugs. Then, pills had to be rolled, and even silvered, powders had to be pestled, and ointments to be mixed. The cutting and rolling of bandages and the lining of splints would be part of his work. The making of tinctures and infusions, the stirring and dividing of powders, the spreading of blisters, also took up much time in the surgery, and outside of it there would be occasional help at operations, or at setting limbs and reducing dislocations. Amongst the more wearying of his duties would be the daily or weekly "posting up the books," and every quarter or so "the sending out the bills." In Lettsom's days there were no administrations of anæsthetics, a duty which devolved chiefly on the apprentice in the days of my pupilage.

Lettsom was apprenticed for five years to a country apothecary; I was a "medical pupil" (which had become the designation of the Victorian era) for two years. This stage in medical education is now extinct, and it is not likely that it will ever be revived. Yet it had much to recommend it, and one cannot help thinking that to it Lettsom was indebted for many things, and, amongst others, for the art of putting in practice the Hippocratic aphorism that "the physician must not only be prepared to do what is right himself, but also to make the patient, the attendants, and the externals co-operate."

STUDIES MEDICINE.

At the end of his five years in Settle, and at the age of 20, Lettsom, in 1766, started for London, where he was without a relation and did not know a friend. His subsequent career is so

well epitomised in a letter he wrote twenty-five years later, that I cannot do better than transcribe it:—

“London, December 31st, 1791.

“Medicine is rather a practical than a brilliant art, and depends upon study as much as genius. Poverty led me to physic. I was placed with a country apothecary, whose fee was moderate. I had no particular predilection for medicine. I never possessed genius; my memory was bad; I made dictionaries and tables of my own invention; to assist memory, I formed indexes of what I read, and by industry acquired something. I came to London, and saw Dr. (John) Fothergill, my ambition was inflamed, and I dared to say, London shall be my theatre; but having no more money than to carry me through the hospitals I could not attend many lectures, and upon this depended my improvement; for instead of hearing and learning of lectures, I was compelled to learn at the bed of sickness. Here I saw nature, and learnt my art without the leading-strings of professors. I acquired an early habit of behaving with kindness to the sick, and having known want, I knew how to sympathise with distress. After two years in an hospital I went to the West Indies to get assistance to bring me upon the theatre I now act. Six months abroad enabled me to visit London, Edinburgh, and Leyden, and ultimately to sit down in the first city; and I know not why any other person, with £500, may not do the same.

“Yours respectfully,

“J. C. LETTSOM.”

This is a good letter with a brave ring in it, revealing much of our Founder's character both by what it states, and also by what it omits. Lettsom does not mention in this letter that though he returned, for the first and only time in his life, to his native island to get assistance, his first action on arrival in the West Indies was to free the fifty slaves he had inherited. Apart from these slaves, and a small portion of land, he was not possessed of £50 in the world. “The moment I came of age,” as he writes in another letter (January 20th, 1791), “I found my chief property was in slaves, and without considering of future support, I gave them freedom, and began the world without fortune, without a friend, without person, and without address.”

PRACTICE IN LONDON: INCOME.

The "assistance" which he went to seek on the Island of Tortola he himself created by starting practice there at the age of twenty-three, and in the short space of five months he amassed the surprising sum of £2,000. He must surely have had a keen sense of the business side of his profession if at this age, and as a first start, and in an insignificant West Indian Island, he could earn from his profession at the rate of £4,800 per annum. His income later on was equally astonishing. His biographer states that by the age of forty he had acquired, and for a considerable time maintained, the first practice as a physician in the City of London. It appears that in 1783 (at the age of 39) he received £3,600; in 1784, £3,900; in 1785, £4,015; in 1786, £4,500. It is said that if, at this time, he had accepted all the fees presented to him, his receipts would have been nearly doubled. From 1786 to 1800 (aged 42 to 56) they increased greatly, amounting to not less than between £5,000 and £12,000 annually. When we remember Lettson's lack of professional prestige, his comparative youth, his distinguished contemporaries, and the much greater purchasing power of money a hundred and twenty-five years ago, this goodly income—so far as my experience goes—is a higher pecuniary reward than the physician of the present day can hope for. But, if he made a good income, it was only earned by hard and incessant work. Thus, of this £2,000 he earned by practice at Tortola, he gave half to his mother, and, with the remaining £1,000, he determined to return to England. After a *Wanderjahr* spent at Edinburgh, Paris and elsewhere, he took his Degree of Doctor of Medicine at Leyden on June 20th, 1769, with a thesis entitled "Observationes ad vires Theræ pertinentes" and commenced practice in London under the protection of Dr. John Fothergill. If Lettson earned much money he also spent it generously; in a letter written in his 39th year (February 18th, 1783) he writes that "with an income of £5,000 a year I am always involved." This need not surprise us when we read that between the first day of January and the third week in February his donations one year amounted to £600. Besides this munificence in charity, his hospitality must have involved him in lavish expenditure. He writes that "with one domestic or another I have about twenty-two in family" (Letter 49, January 16th, 1787).

COUNTRY HOUSE AT CAMBERWELL.

This was doubtless between his house in Sambrook Court, Basinghall Street, in the City, and the considerable mansion which he erected in 1779 and calls "my rural villa about 4 miles from town" (Figs. 3 and 5, pp. 13 and 15). This was Grove Hill, at Camberwell, where he had five acres of garden, 200 fruit trees, a botanical garden, a large museum, a library of 12,000 volumes, an apiary of 64 hives, walks, lawns, fountains, ponds, groups of statuary, and an avenue called "Shakespeare's Walk," with what Pettigrew calls "an uncommonly fine statue of our immortal Dramatist" at the end of it (Fig. 4, p. 14). It is generally supposed that Camberwell owes its name to a famous well, and it has even been claimed that the identical well was situated on Dr. Lettsom's estate.* The property, unfortunately, passed out of his hands before his death, but a full description of it is enshrined in a volume of blank verse by the Rev. Thomas Maurice, a charmingly illustrated quarto book of 76 pages.† The Medical Society is the fortunate possessor of a copy of this quaint work, recently presented to it by Mr. John H. A. Elliot, a great-grandson of Dr. Lettsom's daughter Eliza, who married Colonel John Elliot, F.R.S. (Fellow of New College, Oxford).‡ From this poem, written in the stilted style of the period, we learn that from the summit of Grove Hill views could be enjoyed of Deptford, Woolwich, the "stately towers of Greenwich" ("superb asylum of the brave"), the shipping on "the exulting tide" of the Thames, the "sister hills" of Hampstead and Highgate, Stanmore's "fir-clad height," and—

"... Harrow's lofty bower and spire-crown'd brow
Majestic frowning on the plains below."

At Grove Hill Lettsom was in the habit of receiving visits from celebrated foreigners, and men of learning and taste. No less a character than Dr. Johnson's biographer, the immortal Boswell, was

* W. H. Blanch, 'Ye Parish of Camberwell,' 1875.

† 'Grove Hill. A Descriptive Poem. By the Author of Indian Antiquities. The engravings on wood by J. Anderson, from drawings by G. Samuel. London: Printed by T. Bensley, for John and Arthur Arch, Gracechurch Street, and J. Wright, Piccadilly, 1799.'

‡ 'Trans. Med. Soc. London,' vol. xli, 1918.

a frequent visitor there and refers to these Camberwell parties in some verses from which I quote the following:—

“Yet are we gay in ev’ry way,
 Not minding where the joke lie :
 On Saturday at bowls we play
 At Camberwell with COAKLEY.
 Methinks you laugh to hear but half,
 The name of Dr. LETTSOM :
 From him of good,—talk, liquors, food,—
 His guests will always get some.
 And guests has he, in ev’ry degree,
 Of decent estimation ;
 His liberal mind holds all mankind
 As an extended Nation.
 LETTSOM we view a *Quaker* true,
 ’Tis clear he’s so in one sense :
 His SPIRIT strong, & ever young,
 Refutes pert Priestley’s nonsense.
 In fossils he is deep we see,
 Nor knows Beasts, Fishes, Birds ill :
 With plants not few, some from Pelew,
 And wondrous *Mangel Wurzel* !
 West India bred, warm heart, cool head,
 The City’s first Physician
 By schemes *humane*,—Want, Sickness, Pain,
 To aid is his ambition.”

Referring to his week-ends at Grove Hill he mentions that he had “escaped depredators and robbers pretty well, not having been attacked above four times in twenty years.” In parenthesis I might mention that I go through Camberwell in my weekly visits to my Clinic, and that my motor car runs me down to King’s College Hospital in twenty-five minutes through the long, weary, sordid, and mean streets which have replaced the country lanes where his coach once rolled.

Towards the end of his life “a train of adverse circumstances, originating in the prodigality of benevolence, obliged Dr. Lettsom to part with his delightful mansion” (Pettigrew). Many of his books and tracts found their way to the British Museum.

GROVE HILL TO-DAY.

The house at Grove Hill subsequently became a school for young ladies, and there are Fellows of the Society who recall attending

patients there. A recent visit, in the company of our Registrar (Mr. Bethell) and Mr. and Mrs. John Elliot, disclosed the fact that Lettsom's villa has been pulled down and a row of houses built in

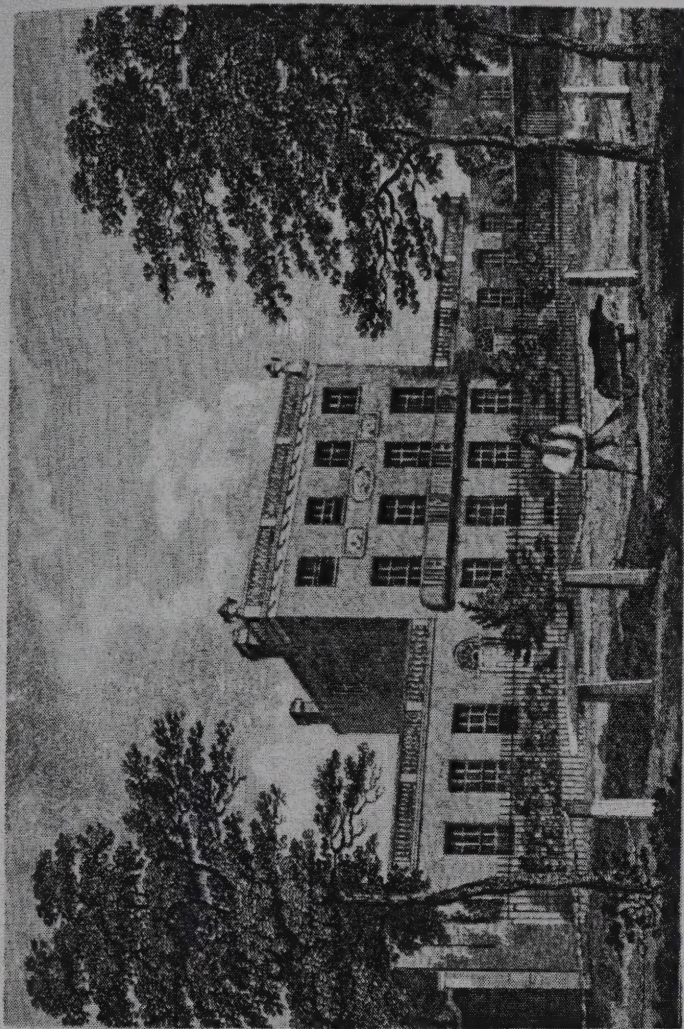


FIG. 3.—Lettsom's house at Grove Hill, Camberwell. North View.

its place. However, the house and garden represented in the plan as belonging to Mr. Henry Smith and included in Lettsom's property (marked T in the plan, Fig. 4), still exist, and as they appear to be

unaltered after 140 years, they give a good idea of the dignity and charm of the "rural retreat" where our Founder, "his spirit strong and ever young," was wont to spend his week ends, and dispense the generous hospitality which made his guests "gay in ev'ry way." This property is, fortunately, in the possession of a member of our profession, Dr. Couper Cripps, and both house and garden are in excellent preservation.

The Rev. T. Maurice thus apostrophises Camberwell Grove:—

"Ye towering elms, on whose majestic brows
An hundred rolling years have shed their snows,
Admit me to your dark sequestered reign,
To roam with contemplation's studious train."

The Grove exists to-day, with its fine avenue of trees, as marked on the plan of 1792 (Fig. 4), but, as we climb its straight ascent, we notice that the elms have become old and scanty. The dark, sequestered shade is now-a-days gratefully spread by a younger generation of planes, chestnuts, Lombardy poplars, oaks, limes, and acacia trees. On the left hand we notice that "Lower Springfield," "The Fountain," "Upper Springfield," "The Lawn," and "The Orchard,"—marked on the plan of Lettsom's Estate (Fig. 4)—have all disappeared before the advance of the builder. But, on the left-hand side, there is a street which bears the name "Lettsom Street," and exactly opposite to it there still stands a solitary thatch-roofed cottage, looking picturesque and forlorn, so near to grimy streets, but helping us to imagine how rustic was the retreat to which our Founder escaped—when not attacked by "depredators and robbers" during his four-mile drive from London.

Sambrook Court, his house in London, has vanished from Basinghall Street.

HARD WORK: FULL LIFE.

As I have said, Lettsom's good income, which he spent so generously, was earned by constant hard work. As early as the age of twenty-three he records that he seldom prescribed for fewer than fifty, and often twice as many, patients before breakfast. When he was thirty-eight he writes (December 12th, 1782) that, "sometimes for the space of a week, I cannot command twenty minutes' leisure in my own house." A year later he writes, "since 1769 when I first settled in London I have not taken one half day's relaxation, and I cannot get to Grove Hill above once a fortnight." In 1791 (he was then aged 47), he observes, "during

(To face p. 14.)

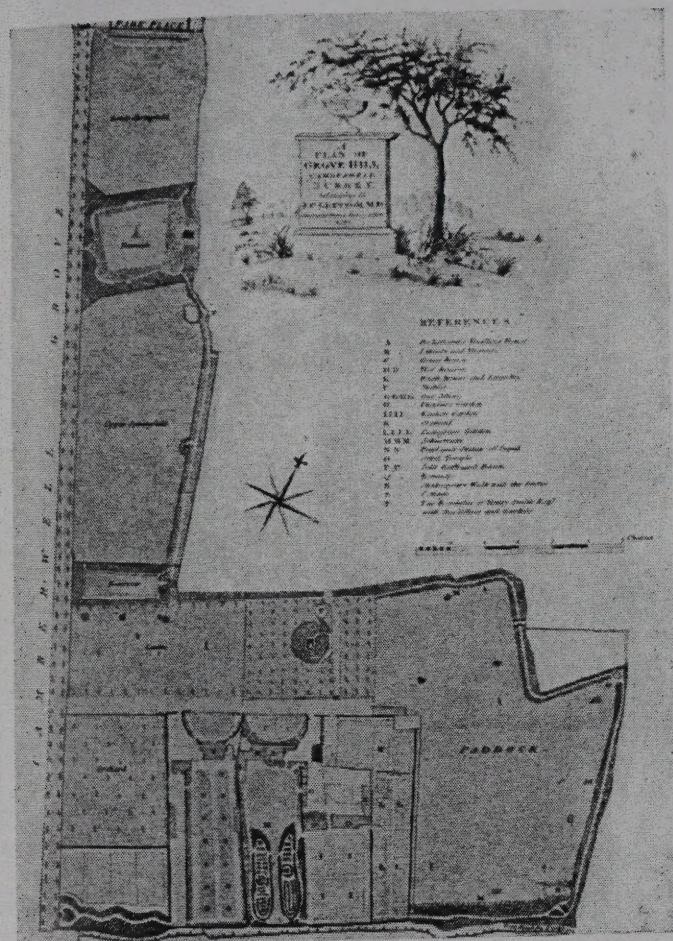


FIG. 4.—A Plan of Grove Hill, Camberwell, Surrey, belonging to J. C. Lettsom, M.D. Engraved from a survey taken in 1792, and published on September 1st, 1793, by J. Edwards, Betchworth, Surrey. (From a print in the possession of the Medical Society.)



the last nineteen years not one holiday have I taken, and this will probably be the last of my life, unless sickness compels me to seek

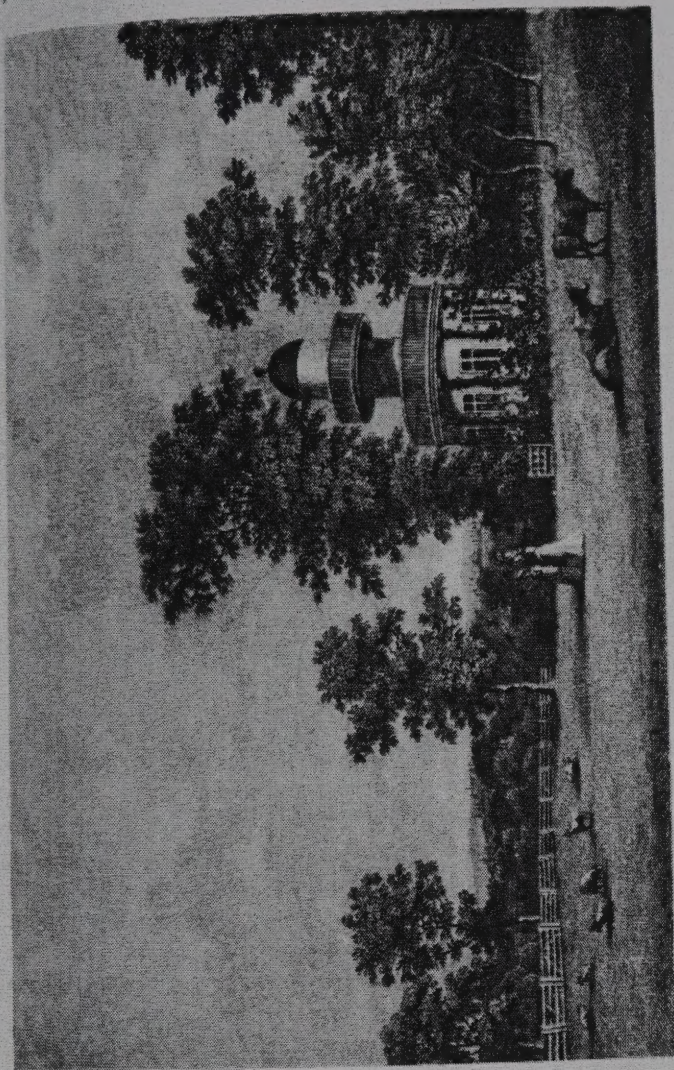


FIG. 5.—The Observatory, or Temple of the Sybils, which stood in the corner of the Park at Grove Hill, in the corner marked O on the Plan, Fig. 4

leisure." The "holiday" here referred to consisted in travelling by coach to Margate, spending two hours on important business there, and returning the same day, 144 miles in the day and night. In another letter he records that his practice "had not suffered

him to sleep in his own bed for thirteen following nights," and he evidently spent much, not only of his days but of his nights, in his travelling coach, for one correspondent (February 8th, 1783), reproached him for "converting his carriage into a dormitory and a suttlng-booth." His carriage served him for still another purpose; he lived in the days when letter-writing was an art; he was a voluminous writer, at times keeping up frequent communication with 200 correspondents, and yet nearly all his letter-writing was done in his carriage. He writes: "As I live in my carriage, seldom having less than three pair of horses a day, and neglecting my meals, except once a week that I dine with my wife, I have some time to preserve my correspondence, having always in the carriage pen, ink and paper, to amuse myself if I do not amuse my correspondents."* In spite of this he records in his seventieth year that, owing to his large correspondence, he was seldom in bed before one in the morning (March 26th, 1814). When we recall the condition of the roads in the 18th century, the pace at which his coach must sometimes have travelled, and the non-invention of stylographic pens, it is astonishing to glance at the number, length, and completeness of the letters which have been preserved, and to read, in a letter dated September 25th, 1804, that "my professional duties incessantly occupy me, and compel me to write all my essays in my carriage."

FAVOURITE HOLIDAY.

The fullness of his life may also be judged from a record of his favourite holiday. It is described in the following words by his biographer, Pettigrew:—

"The only relaxation, if such it may be called, that Dr. Lettson ever permitted himself to enjoy was an annual visit to Margate, to attend the anniversary of the Institution (*i.e.*, the Sea Bathing Infirmary). For this journey he usually allotted 72 hours. He left town on the Saturday sufficiently early to get to Margate in time to hear the charity-sermon preached on the Sunday morning on behalf of the Institution. The remainder of the day he spent in visiting a few families in the town, at Ramsgate, and at Broadstairs. On Monday he examined every patient in the Infirmary, attended

* Letter 111, September 3rd, 1795, in 'Selections from the Medical Papers and Correspondence of the late John Coakley Lettson.' By Thomas John Pettigrew, London, 1817.

the General Meeting at the Assembly-house, dined with the Governors and friends of the Charity, and at seven o'clock set off for London, where he arrived on the Tuesday morning. This excursion always afforded the Doctor very great satisfaction." No loafing week-end this for the busiest physician in London!

On the occasion of another of his visits he tells us that he sailed from Billingsgate in the packet at four o'clock on the afternoon of the 28th and got to Margate at nine on the 29th. He "left Margate at nine in the evening of the 30th and arrived in London by Chaises at ten o'clock in the morning." A single night in a bed, sandwiched between two strenuous days, preceded by one night tossing down the river in a packet, and followed by a third night of thirteen hours' jolting in post-chaises, was not bad going for a man of 69! (Diary, August 28th-30th, 1813.)*

MANIFOLD INTERESTS.

If all these strenuous days and nights had been devoted solely to his extensive practice, we should not be surprised. But his varied interests and self-imposed duties were spread over a large variety of subjects, and he rendered important public services as a philanthropist. In 1770 he founded the General Dispensary in Aldersgate Street (the first of its kind in London); he established the Sea Bathing Infirmary at Margate; he was one of the Founders of our own Society; he was an active member and a lecturer of the Philosophical Society; he was one of the Founders of the Royal Humane Society; he was a friend and supporter of Edward Jenner, and an active supporter of the recently introduced vaccination for small-pox; the reform of prisons was responsible for his friendship and admiration for John Howard, and the amelioration of the condition of the poor and helpless was his constant care. He was the first man to introduce into England the mangel wurzel, as is jestingly referred to in the verses I have quoted, and he always kept up his interest in botany, agriculture, and fossils. He wrote a book called the 'Naturalist's Companion,' which ran through three editions, two editions of 1,500 being sold within 12 months (Letter 109, December 1st, 1804). He pointed out the use of birds—even crows—and of moles, in Nature's economy, and

* For a reading of Lettsom's manuscript Diary I am indebted to his great-grandson, Mr. John H. A. Elliot.

pleaded for their preservation (Letter 137, June 22nd, 1812). He anticipated our cult of the open window and the researches of Leonard Hill, when he wrote his 'Essay on the Effects of Heat and Stagnant Air' (see Letter 193, September 17th, 1772).

Soup kitchens met with his entire approval; the manner of preparing different kinds of soups is minutely noted in his pamphlet, and the best receipts are given for various articles of diet. Alas, that, after some 125 years, our soups should still be execrable and our cuisine a bye-word amongst the nations! In 1798 he published a tract entitled 'Hints Respecting the Effects of Hard Drinking.' He directed attention to bee-hives, "as appendages both of ornament and utility to the gardens about the metropolis." He calculated that, within 20 miles of London, no less than 50,000 bee-hives might be maintained, which, upon an average, would produce as many guineas annually in honey and wax, two very important articles of domestic use. In 1795 he wrote a tract on 'Hints Respecting the Chlorosis of Boarding Schools,' with advice as to games, diet, clothes, cleanliness, etc. He was greatly interested in the history of medicine. The *Kadavererverwertungsanstalt* in Germany, about which there has recently been some commotion in our Press, would appear, from a letter of Lettsom's, to have been anticipated by 124 years. In 1793 he writes: "A friend of mine has lately discovered the art of changing human flesh, particularly the fleshy part, into spermaceti candles. This is not a fable. He means to light up the large room of the Royal Society with the leg of a man. I advised him to go to the swamps of Dunkirk, to Lyons, Weissenberg, La Vendée, or Toulon, where he might find materials sufficient to supersede all the tallow of Russia. If this project succeed, we shall refine on the custom of the ancients in burning their dead. We may burn our friends over a supper or a pipe. This scheme may puzzle the Materialists about collecting the remains against the last day. My friend has promised me some human candles, but my wife will not suffer them to be burnt" (Letter 95, October 15th, 1793). He begins this same letter by saying, "My son is just returned from Gottingen, after nearly two years' absence," but there is no indication as to whether the friend who had invented this new sort of human spermaceti candle was a Boche or a Briton!

In 1801 he published three 8vo volumes of collected essays under the title of 'Hints Designed to Promote Beneficence, Temperance,

and Medical Science,* and in these are found essays on such varied subjects as Poverty, Discharged Prisoners, Prostitution, Infectious Fevers, a Samaritan Society, Crimes and Punishments, Wills and Testaments, Lying-in Charities, the Deaf and Dumb, Village Societies, the Blind, a Society for Promoting Useful Literature, Hints to Masters and Mistresses, Religious Persecution, Humane Societies for the Recovery of Drowned Persons, the Cow-pock, Card Parties, Sunday Schools, the Philanthropic Society, Dispensaries, Hydrophobia, Sea-bathing Infirmaries, and a Substitute for Wheat Bread. In 1815 he printed a Sketch of the Life and Character of his friend Dr. Rush, entitled "Recollections of Dr. Rush."

Lettsom's works have been divided into three classes:—

- I. Medical and Scientific.
- II. Biographical.
- III. Popular and Philanthropic.

Amongst the first we find 'Reflections on the General Treatment and Cure of Fevers,' in the second class 'The Natural History of the Tea Tree with Observations on its Medical Qualities,' while in the third are found his Lectures on Medicine and Materia Medica with "Practice of Physick." The Dictionary of National Biography gives a list of some 40 or 50 contributions to literature.

SUBSTITUTES FOR WHEATEN BREAD IN WAR TIME IN 1800.

Amongst his manifold interests, the important matter of bread supply—including the social, economic, and national sides of the question—did not escape Lettsom's attention. One gathers from his writings that the price of the quartern loaf in 1774 was 8*d.*, but by 1800 we find him writing: "At present our quartern loaf is 1*s.* 6*d.*, a sum truly oppressive to the poor" (Letter 99, July 28th, 1800). With our present day quartern loaf at only 9*d.*, after three years of world war, our population may take courage by seeing what our forefathers had to endure in the Napoleonic struggles. In 1774 Lettsom, amongst his numerous essays, printed one entitled, "Hints respecting a Substitute for Wheat Bread," and this he re-published in 1801 in the 3rd volume of his 'Hints and Essays.' The substitute he warmly recommends is the fine flour of Indian

* London: Printed by and for Nichols, Son and Bentley, Red Lion Passage, Fleet Street.

corn, to be mixed with that of wheat in equal proportion. He adds that, "if rightly managed, the colour will be about the same as the standard wheaten bread, and about 2*d.* in the quarter loaf cheaper than the fine wheaten, when that may be at 8*d.* per quarter." After insisting on the great nutritive value and the agreeable sweet flavour of maize, he writes: "Some, indeed, do not so easily reconcile themselves to it, which often arises from the mismanagement of grinding the corn or baking the bread." The bakers, he directs, have not acquired the best method of mixing and preparing it with wheat-flour, and as to the grinding, he advises that the mill-stones should first be set so wide as but just to burst the thick or farinaceous part of the grain, which should then be passed through a sieve, so as to separate the part of the interior edge of the grain, composed of a ligneous spongy substance, the middle of which is of a dark brown colour, and of a bitter taste, which, if ground into the flour, gives it a disagreeable flavour. When this deleterious part has been separated on the sieve, the remainder should be ground with the stones set so as to render it sufficiently fine. "By this precaution," he adds, "the flour is as white as that of the finest wheat, and full as pleasant to eat; it possesses the peculiar quality of preserving the bread, made from a mixture of it, in a moist state for many days, which, at least in dry weather, is no inconsiderable advantage." He expatiates on the way in which the adoption of this "substitute" would release our agricultural lands for other important cultivation. Lettsom also suggested the use of potatoes as a partial substitute for bread, and recommends the use of one-fourth of potatoes with the remainder of flour, as comprising the most pleasant and wholesome bread that can be taken. He points out that if a little ground rice is added, the bread is prevented from crumbling, a matter of consequence in a large family.

THE MAKING OF PORRIDGE.

In this same essay on "A Substitute for Wheaten Bread," he describes how porridge should be made. The directions are so detailed, clear, and concise that I cannot refrain from giving it as an example of the scrupulous care he took in his writings and as showing the intimate personal knowledge he had of such small, but highly important, domestic matters. I give his recipe with the

greater willingness, since I know myself that it is the best method, and will result in a very much better dish than one sometimes meets with in England!

Lettsom describes the process as applied to Indian meal (maize), but it is quite the correct way of cooking Scotch oatmeal porridge. He writes as follows:—

"The cheapest and most advantageous method of using Indian corn as food is by making the flour of it into hasty pudding, in a manner very similar to water-pottage, a food made of oatmeal in the North of England and in Scotland. A quantity of water, proportioned to the quantity of hasty pudding intended to be made, is put over the fire in an open iron pot or kettle, and, a proper quantity of salt for seasoning the pudding being previously dissolved in the water, Indian meal is stirred into it by little and little with a wooden spoon with a long handle, while the water goes on to be heated and made to boil, great care being taken to put in the meal by very small quantities, and by sifting it slowly through the fingers of the left hand, and stirring the water about very briskly at the same time with the wooden spoon with the right hand to mix the meal with the water in such a manner as to prevent lumps being formed. The meal should be added so slowly that when the water is brought to boil the mass should not be thicker than water-gruel, and half an hour more at least should be employed to add the additional quantity of meal necessary for bringing the pudding to be of the proper consistency, during which time it should be stirred about continually, and kept constantly boiling. It should be of a consistence to suspend a spoon upright. It may be eaten with milk, or with butter, sugar, or molasses."

AMERICAN FRIENDSHIPS.

A reference to his many honours gives good evidence of the general opinion entertained respecting the literary, philosophical and benevolent character and talents of Lettsom (p. 40). It will be observed that many of them came from America, a part of the world where he had numerous friends and was highly respected. Indeed, in his time, no student from America was thought properly equipped unless provided with letters of recommendation or introduction to Lettsom. So great was their faith in his judgment, that the selection and purchase of books for the Pennsylvania Hospital was entrusted to him. A rich tract of land, the property of his

friend Dr. Benjamin Rush, upon Sugar Creek, a stream which empties itself into the north-east branch of the river Susquehanna bears his name, or at least did, when his Memoirs were published by T. J. Pettigrew in 1817 (vol. i, p. 101).* (Fig. 6.)

He was the first to send Jenner's vaccine lymph across the Atlantic, consigning it to the care of his friend Dr. Waterhouse, Professor of Medicine in the University of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

He sent the seeds of the mangel wurzel to Dr. Benjamin Rush, of Philadelphia, who acknowledged them as follows: "Many thanks to you for the seeds of the mangel wurzel. I have distributed them extensively. To our great and good Virginian farmer, General Washington, I have sent the largest number of them" (Letter 205, May 4th, 1788).

ASSOCIATION WITH CELEBRATED PEOPLE.

But his large practice and all these multifarious occupations did not exhaust Lettsom's boundless activity. His various interests and his general culture, added to his hospitable and cheerful character, brought him into contact with many of the most celebrated people of his generation,—a time when the renaissance of English art and literature was in full flower. Although he was born, brought up, and lived a Quaker he was—particularly for that period—remarkably free from all religious bigotry. In spite of the tenets of his sect he was gazetted Physician to the Camberwell Volunteer Infantry in September, 1803, and although he writes, "as a Quaker I could not adopt a military character," yet, he exclaims, "May I fall by the sword rather than live to see this free country the domain of a Corsican murderer and usurper!" (April 20th, 1805.) We might commend this generous sentiment of 1805 in a Quaker physician, aged 60, to the conscientious objectors of our own day. Dr. Lettsom, though ready to die by the sword, declined, as a Quaker, to wear one. When referring in a letter to George III he writes: "The King has always been

* Through the great kindness of Prof. W. W. Keen, of Philadelphia, I have been able to trace this tract of land, and Mr. Thomas L. Montgomery, of the Pennsylvania State Library, Harrisburg, has been good enough to supply a copy of the map reproduced in Fig. 6. He points out that the plots in this plan were not owned by Dr. Benjamin Rush,—the hero physician at the time of the plague in Philadelphia in 1793,—but by his son, Richard, Attorney General, afterwards Secretary of the Treasury, and at one time Minister to England. He also informs me that there is no mention of the two names,—Lettsome and Fothergill,—in the modern maps nor in the Gazetteer.

(To face p. 22.)

which follows is a Map of the State of Pennsylvania (one of the called States of America) including the Territory lately purchased of the High Government its Northeast and West Branches Tyoga, Seneca, Chemung, Juniata, Lehigh, Luzerne, Schuylkill and the western and Eastern parts and the larger Creeks and most of the lesser Streams Mountains the old principal Roads with the many new ones in the region Counties and Townships. Division of the Districts of Representation and Burial Lots, with all the other Districts in it containing the Act of the Congress of the United States, Intituled "An Act for the encouragement of Learning by securing the copies of all

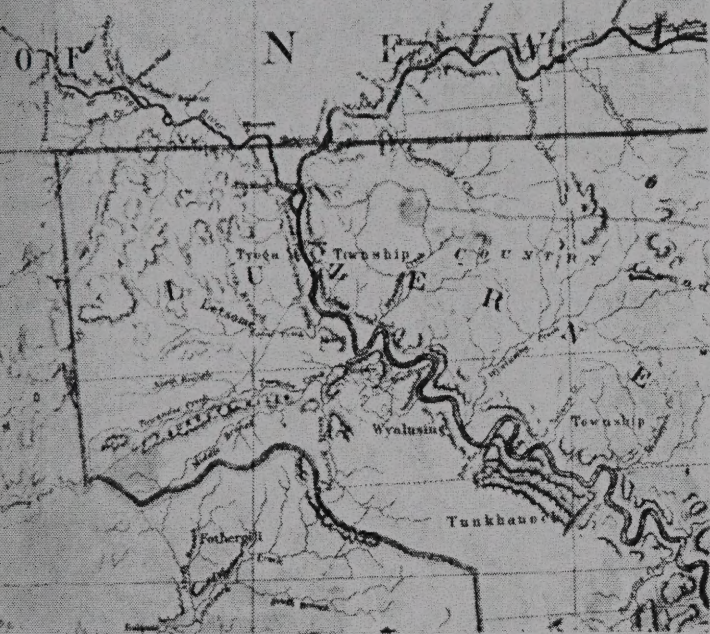


FIG. 6.—Map of Pennsylvania showing the district on Sugar Creek called "Letsome," and, further south, that on Loyalsock Creek, called "Fothergill," belonging to Richard Rush. (From Howell's map of Pennsylvania, 1792.) See p. 22.



very kind to me, and admitted me more than once into his presence without a Court dress, which I never could assume, and perhaps I am the only person who ever kissed his hand unpowdered and unsworded." Lettsom's friendships also were untainted by religious narrowness; indeed, he expresses his partiality for the society of the Clergy of the English Church, because, as he says, "they are a learned and improved part of the community." "The religion of a Quaker," he adds, "as far as I know, is as expansive as the air; at least I entertain no partialities for sect" (Letter 109, December 1st, 1804). With one of them, the Rev. J. Plumtre, he kept up a steady correspondence for ten years. So, in regard to the theatre, he writes as follows, on December 1st, 1784: "About fourteen years ago I went to see Garriek in *King Lear*, and never since have been at any theatre till the present time; it is not quite consistent with our religious system, but I confess I like to see perfection in every species of art, and this wonderful woman, Mrs. Siddons, being a subject of universal admiration. I ventured, against ecclesiastical orthodoxy, to see her in *Zara*. It is astonishing with what powers of nature and passion she can place herself in the tender movements of the heart. She speaks as if she suffered all the woes she describes, but she speaks most powerfully to the soul when she is silent: her features, her attitudes, give utterance to that language which melts the heart, and interests imagination. She is a fine figure; she is just that medium which has softness without grossness, and tender expression without languor." This catholicity in his tastes and friendships is further illustrated by the following letter, thanking Sir Mordaunt Martin for the present of a turkey (April 27th, 1792): "Accept my thanks for the gigantic turkey, which faced with gallantry and undismay a group of different nations and sects. I had Sir John Peter, Consul at Ostend, Professor Blumenbach from Göttingen, besides a Scotchman, an Irishman, a Dane, an American, a West Indian, a Papist, a Presbyterian, a Quaker, a No Religion, a Sandemanian, and a staunch Churchman, who all agreed in one Creed, that the dead Philistine or Titan merited the united benediction. It was an entertainment that afforded me much gratification. Happy sacrifice to the appetite of man, that thou shouldst effect more concord amongst different nations and sects, than even reason, the proudest and sublimest of all men's gifts!" This sociable and cosmopolitan trait in his character is noted by his biographer who writes—"The

universality of his acquaintance, his extensive practice as a physician, his unbounded philanthropy, and his connection with public institutions for the promotion of medical, philosophical, literary, and benevolent pursuits, introduced him to the knowledge of all classes of Society and obtained for him universal esteem and admiration." Lettson was associated with some of the most celebrated men of his time, an age rich in historical personalities. We have seen how he was frequently received by King George III; he records his impressions of hearing Pitt and Fox speak in the House of Commons, he corresponded with "General Washington of America," Dr. Rush of Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin, Erasmus Darwin, Baron Haller; Sir Charles Linné (Linnæus) wrote to him in Latin; he studied under Dr. Akenside (the author of the 'Pleasures of Imagination,' whom he found "the most supercilious and unfeeling Physician he had hitherto known"); amongst the Founders of the Royal Humane Society (1774) he came in contact with Dr. Oliver Goldsmith, Dr. Heberden and William Fox; he interrogated George Bidder, the remarkable eight-year-old boy who lived in St. Bartholomew Close, who could not write and scarcely read and yet made long arithmetical calculations (May 17th, 1815); he came across Joanna Southcott and attended Lady Huntingdon; he met Braham at musical parties, and he dined with Wilkes, Boswell, and "Lee the American" (February 8th, 1788); he knew the celebrated Lady Hamilton and was very grateful to her for her kindness to his son when visiting Naples;* Sir William Hamilton, "loaded with years and honours" visited him at Grove Hill; it is not clear if he ever met Lord Nelson, but the great sailor expressed his "respect and admiration" over several of the letters written by Lettson to Nelson's neighbour in Norfolk, Sir M. Martin (he of the Titanic turkey); amongst his intimate friends were Edward Jenner, of Berkeley, in Gloucestershire, and Babington, who nearly invented the laryngoscope (see p. 61).

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON AND BOSWELL.

Boswell, whose verses I have already quoted, was a frequent visitor at Grove Hill, and Dr. Samuel Johnson must often have called in

* Lettson writes that he had also been acquainted with Lady Hamilton "when Miss Hunt" (Letter 122, June 3rd, 1805), but this is doubtless a slip of the pen for "Miss Hart," as Emma Hart was her name in her early and cloudy days.

there on his way to tea with Mrs. Thrale, at Streatham. Lettsom evidently knew him well, and gives us the following exquisite pen picture of him (January 13th, 1785):—"The late Dr. Johnson was a pious man; attached, I confess, to established system, but it was from principle. In company I neither found him austere nor dogmatical; he was certainly not polite, but he was not rude; he was familiar with suitable company, but his language in conversation was sententious; he was sometimes jocular, but you felt as if you were playing with a lion's paw. His body was large, his features strong, his face scarred and furrowed with the scrofula; he had a heavy look, but when he spoke, it was like lightening over a dark cloud. With a capaciousness of mind, and some inequalities in it, like his face, he resembled a Colossus, which, like that at Rhodes, embraced the whole sea of literature, affording awe and distance rather than esteem and social friendships; and from some of his writings one may discern a sternness from his disappointment rather than from philosophy. His *Rasselas*, Prince of Abyssinia, was perhaps his own picture, and it inculcates apathy to the world, rather than happiness in it. Upon the whole, he seems not to have been a happy man; his religion was rigid rather than social; and his mind warped by system rather than humanised by virtue and truth. But who is perfect?"

Lettsom's conviviality is illustrated by the following description of his meeting with the renowned Admiral Sir William Sydney Smith (1764-1840), at the house of his friend and patient, Abraham Goldsmid:—"At Goldsmid's ball I met a man I had wished much to know, Sir Sydney Smith, so I told him, and he assured me he had a similar *penchant*. We ate a sandwich together, and then hob-nob'd our glasses of porter, and at half-past one in the morning I left him dancing with a Jewess" (January 3rd, 1805). This cheery picture of a Quaker in his 61st year, the leading physician in full practice in London, fully bears out his own statement that "my spirits carry me through a succession of employments with facility" (December 12th, 1782).

LETTSOM'S STRENUOUS LIFE.

Certainly his constant "succession of employments," his enormous practice by day and by night, his long coach journeys, his multifarious social engagements, his hospitable entertainments, the care of his garden, his voluminous correspondence and his extensive

publications, fill one with wonder. When we recollect that this full life was lived without our modern aids to despatch in the way of secretaries and stenographers, telephones and telegrams, railways and motor cars, one is the more astonished. Evidently the strenuous life was not invented by Theodore Roosevelt, and a physician of the 18th century could work as hard as any hustler of our time to earn neurasthenia and nervous prostration. We are not surprised that a friend wrote to him (Letter 6, February 8th, 1783) that "the perpetual vortex and whirl in which you live really amazes me," and pertinently asked, on hearing of Lettsom's visiting 50 to 100 patients a day, "Is it possible that, with all your learning, sagacity and acuteness, you can, on such a superficial view and inquiry, be thoroughly instructed in all the circumstances of your patients' cases and constitutions?" His friends preached (Letter 8, March 5th, 1783), "some repose and some relaxation from that perpetual tension both of mind and body" which goaded him "to persist in such an incessant hurry and whirl." And again, "Let me seriously advise you, my friend, for the sake of your health, to relinquish your nocturnal lucubrations and your convivialities. Go to bed with your wife and family at 11 o'clock and rise every morning as early as Mr. Hales" (Letter 10, March 18th, 1783). Two years later (Letter 45, November 25th, 1785), the same candid acquaintance writes: "Upon my word, my good friend, your situation is truly deplorable and claims compassion. Neither night nor day, nor any change of season allows you a moment's repose, incessantly employed in rattling along the streets and highways, on a long trot, hearing dismal narratives of disease and despondency, prescribing for the sick, relieving the wants of others by your benevolence, composing works for the benefit of the public, superintending the progress of the press and carrying on an extensive correspondence—even compelled to write in your carriage." These jobations respecting "the whirlwind in which I live and move" Lettsom accepted with great good nature, expressed "a decreasing ardour after medical employment and a thirst for rural retreat" (Letter 3), determined "on sleeping every night out of town," "quitting night business and long night journeys" (Letter 75, March 13th, 1790), and yet, some 14 years later, we find he is "rarely" at Camberwell, but "usually dines there every Sunday with a party of select friends and now and then sleeps there" (Letter 109, December 1st, 1804). Although he

deploras that his "professional duties obliged him to remain a denizen of the metropolis," yet he was able to hob-a-nob at balls at half-past one in the morning and take his week-end rest by a rush to Margate and back!

The fact is, Lettsom loved his life and revelled in his overwork. "I love my profession," he writes, "I live with my patients in the most frank sociality, and I fancy they love rather than fear me." And, again, "medical business is not my plague but my pleasure" (Letter 4, December 12th, 1782). In his fifty-first year he writes: "This is the highest and most divine profession, that can engage human intellect. I have attended eighty-two thousand patients, and what can equal the dignity of having so many lives entrusted to your decision! What more divine, than to sooth the afflicted, and soften agony! What more sublime than to restore to life the victim of disease! I envy not the prince on the throne, nor the sultan in his harem, whilst I enjoy the confidence of the sick chamber and the blessing of the restored. I love my profession, perhaps too much. It loves me, and I have no objection to die in the chamber of malady, provided I can mitigate it in a fellow creature" (Letter 111, September 3rd, 1795). Indeed, Lettsom's life was an illustration of the saying, "Si l'amour de la médecine fait le savant, c'est l'amour du malade qui fait le médecin." He also believed in varied interests and in the virtue of enjoyment.* Writing on distractions and hobbies, he says (Letter 47, May 28th, 1786): "For my part, it ill behoves me to censure, who keep a whole stud of race-hobbies. If I had leisure, I would take up a defence of them under proper bits and bridles. They are the best remedies I know of for that dangerous disease called *ennui*, which is an introduction to every other malady of the mind. If money, by increasing and hoarding it, conferred any mental good, it would be wrong to increase intellectual pleasures at the expense of the *Summum Bonum*; but, if hoarding it be proved the *Summum Vitium*, let us, dear friend, occasionally trot, and even gallop, our intellectual hobbies.

* "In thus connecting a diversity of objects, our investigations are accelerated, and our perceptions expanded; the mind not only becomes more vigorous, but elegant from the frequent and extensive use of its powers; what it hath begun, it will have the sagacity to finish; and what perfected, the spirit to refine. For want of this liberal and vigorous cultivation of the arts, the mind has gradually become enervated, and has relinquished that sublimity and refinement which it had once acquired" (J. C. Lettsom, 'History of the Origin of Medicine,' London, 1878, Introduction, p. 8).

Who will thank us for dying rich? Not those who get hold of our scrapings. And pray who earns his money with more solicitude than a physician? Who, therefore, has a greater moral right to exchange care for pleasure? especially when those pleasures are the gratification of intellect. This rational system of conduct is not beneath the wisest and best of us; let us therefore keep our hobbies and ride them too." In these words we seem to hear, echoing down the centuries, the philosophic advice of Shakespeare to—

"frame your mind to mirth and merriment
Which bars a thousand harms and lengthens life."

The Taming of the Shrew, Induction, Sc. 2.

and not

"To tie my treasure up in silken bags,
To please the fool and death."

Pericles, iii, 2.

A study of his career convinces me that Lettsom threw himself into his profession from love of the practice of it, and into his philanthropic works from, as his biographer states, "benevolence and real goodness of heart." Certain it is that he had no need to work so hard for mere money, for when he was only 26 years of age, he married the daughter of a wealthy tin-plate worker, resident in Cannon Street, "and by this marriage acquired a very considerable fortune." And he was neither self-indulgent, extravagant, nor niggardly, for he tells a friend "that with an income of many thousands a year from my profession I cannot grow rich." Although he "enjoyed"—as the usual phrase puts it—the most fashionable practice in London, yet he realised fully the fickleness of the public, their ignorance in matters medical, and the craze for quackery even amongst the upper and cultured classes. In a letter to a medical friend in Dorchester he writes: "Among the people of fashion in London, quackery is cultivated. Can one wonder at lying advertisements, when it is known that Garrick, Lord Lonsdale, and the Bishop of London were for awhile the patients of Myersbach.* These were men of sense; but what is the intellectual state of our nobility? Perpetually enslaved by the novelty of fashion, however *outré*, they acquire a constitutional propensity to imitation in everything; and leave their physician as they quit an old coat" (Letter 52, August, 1787).

* A well known German quack of the period.

LETTSON'S PERSONALITY.

What manner of man was Lettsom, and how did he manage to live this strenuous life until he was over three score years and ten? His colleague and biographer, Thomas Joseph Pettigrew, thus describes his "person and habits": "He was of a tall, delicate, extenuated structure; his face was very strongly furrowed, and his skin was of a dark yellow tint. He was remarkably neat

in his dress, which was uniformly the same and constructed after the manner (though not with the utmost precision) of the religious society to which he belonged. He was astonishingly active, even until the commencement of his last illness. He usually walked to attend a portion of his patients for two or three hours in the morning, after which he would take his carriage to visit the remainder. He enjoyed a very good state of health, though subject to a cough in the winter months, for which he usually bled and applied a blister, but he never confined himself on this account. His temperate

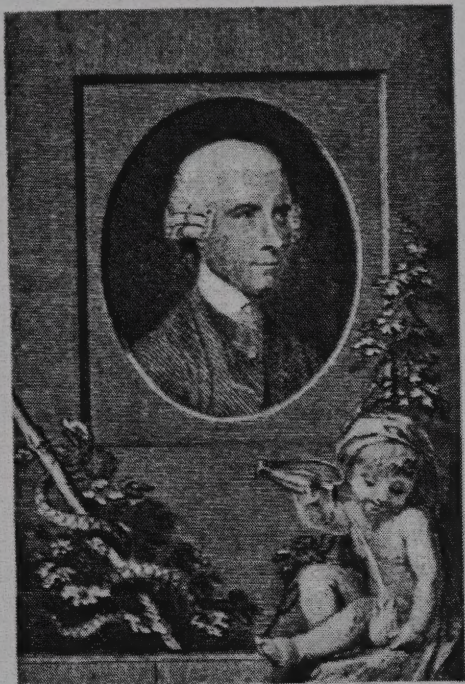


FIG. 7.—John Coakley Lettsom.
(From a print kindly lent by Mr. John H. A. Elliot.)

habits conduced to the enjoyment of health. He seldom exceeded taking more than three or four glasses of wine after dinner, which meal he usually ate with a keen appetite. Coffee was his favourite beverage, which, as he was accustomed to sit up frequently during half the night, to answer his numerous correspondents, and pursue his literary engagements, very much refreshed him. Before going to rest, he uniformly bathed his

limbs in cold water, and in the morning aspersed the whole of his body with the same. To this practice he attributed the excellent state of health he possessed. The equable temper he preserved, no doubt, contributed materially to this desirable end; for his own benevolent heart impelled him to construe with indulgence the actions of others, however unfavourable they might appear; for he was never known to speak ill, even of his own inveterate enemies. He was the uniform pacificator of all differences amongst his friends, which came to his knowledge, and he very rarely failed in effecting an adjustment of them. His friendship, as might be expected, corresponded with the rest of his disposition and character; for, although he was most *scrupulously* tardy in forming attachments, experience, unfortunately, had taught him the fallacy of confiding too hastily on meretricious appearances; but, when once assured of the correctness of his judgment, he proved a firm and undeviating friend. His conversation was very sprightly, and enlivened with a variety of curious anecdotes. So perfectly could he adapt himself to the habits of all kinds of society, that he was as fit a companion for the young as for the aged; and each received the benefit of his instructive remarks, while the smile of benignity beamed upon his countenance, and the warm strain of benevolence played round his heart." This description of our Founder's appearance confirms the impressions we receive from the engravings accompanying this biography, and the paintings on the walls of this room. The portrait on the west wall is less worthy than the celebrated group on the east wall by Samuel Medley, which shows Lettson and the original Fellows of the Medical Society. His personality is brought more before us if we remember that he was "unpowdered and unsworded," that he wore a bob wig, and that his reference to himself as "a volatile Croole" may explain his yellow complexion. (*Cf.* Figs. 1 and 7, and Fig. 16, facing p. 54).

METHOD OF WORK.

This being Lettson's personal appearance, what was there in his manner of work to explain all he got through? His biographer gives as the following explanation:—"To a naturally good capacity, he united the greatest degree of perseverance. This enabled him to surmount various obstacles, that in the course of his practice naturally occurred. The want of a good memory obliged him to

be methodical; and, by great, and it may be said, a truly surprising regularity, he so economised his time, as to be capable of engaging in the immense variety of occupations alluded to." These notes to help his defective memory are elsewhere referred to as amounting to no less than 40,000. When casting around for the other causes of his great success one sees that Lettsom must have had a certain worldly astuteness to start making such a good income so early and to continue at it for so long. A hint as to his shrewdness is conveyed in the approbation with which he quotes Samuel Fothergill's advice: "Please thy master, and above all please thy mistress." Lettsom, although a keen and independent observer, a ready writer and a frequenter of our Medical Society, never made any striking contribution to medical science. He had no great hospital appointment; he had no pupils to spread his fame; and he had no position at the Court or in the College of Physicians to give him prestige. His success in practice must have been due to his own personality, his sincerity, his great industry, and his direct influence upon his patients. It is abundantly evident from his letters, that he enjoyed not only the exercise of his art, but the opportunity it gave his broad humanity, to be a real comforter and friend to his patients. In one he writes: "This I know, that I never lost a patient in a family that I did not acquire the whole family by it," for "I think a humane physician, who evinces by his conduct a tender interest in the recovery of his patient, never loses reputation by an event which no human means could prevent; on the contrary, often times nearer attachments are acquired." He evidently had the happy knack of getting on easy terms with his patients; he had Mirabeau's "don terrible de la familiarité," for he writes, "I would rather be familiarly happy than acquire distant veneration" (Letter 9, March 13th, 1783). Being a Quaker, he had no crest or coat-of-arms: but the motto on his book-plate is *Dum Spiro Spero*.

LETTSON'S CHARACTER.

It was possibly his equable temperament, and his placidity in the presence of disaster, which led to the well-known lampoon:

"When any sick to me apply,
I physicks, bleeds, & sweats 'em;
If after that they choose to die,
What's that to me,
I LETTSOM."*

This lampoon was evidently widely known. A reference to it is enshrined in the 'Ingoldsby Legends,' in the poem, "The Wedding Day":—

"At length, after no little clamour and din,
The foul air let out and the fresh air let in,
They drag one and all
Up into the hall,
Where a medical Quaker, the great Dr. Lettsom,
Who's one of the party, 'bleeds, physicks, and sweats 'em.'"

* Amongst other versions of this oft-quoted verse are the following:—

"When patients come to I
I physicks, bleeds, & sweats 'em;
Then—if they choose to die,
What's that to I—I lets 'em.
(I. LETTSOM).

and

"When any patients call in haste,
I physicks, bleeds, and sweats 'em,
If after that they choose to die,
Well, then, I lets 'em.

and

"If any folk applies to I,
I blisters, bleeds, & sweats 'em;
If after that they please to die,
Well, then, I lets 'em.

and

"I, John Lettsom,
Blisters, bleeds, & sweats 'em;
If after that they please to die,
I, John, lets 'em.

and

"You say I'm dead, I say you lie,
I physicks, bleeds, & sweats 'em;
If after this my patients die,
Why, verily—J. Lets 'em.

He evidently believed in bleeding, for we read that in 1795, from excessive exertion in his profession, he was attacked with fever, for which he was under the necessity of losing 110 ounces of blood.

His pliability may have led to his being caricatured in the 'Westminster Magazine' of September, 1782, under the title of "Dr. Wriggle or the art of rising in physic." He philosophically refers to this as "Very complimentary; for what is greater honour, when an enemy professedly attempts to injure you, that you have so lived, as to leave him incapable of saying a bad thing of you?" (Letter 3, October 16th, 1782). Through his long correspondence there is no hint that he was ever angry with or retaliated on his enemies. On the contrary, by calm reasoning and the soft answer that turneth away wrath, he generally carried conviction and won over his adversary, as is shown by his controversies with the *Critical* and the *Monthly Reviews*. Yet Lettsom's early rise and long career, as the leading physician in London, must have excited the envy of his less prosperous, though possibly better endowed, contemporaries, and his success in practice must have stirred the jealousy and malevolence of his colleagues of the baser sort. Yet the fact that, without these endowments, he moved freely in professional circles, an intimate friend of leaders of thought at home and abroad, taking a prominent part in the scientific life and social progress of his country, is good evidence of his own sturdy independence and well-justified self-regard; while his acceptance by the profession, and the absence of jealousy and cabals against him, show that he was a good deal more than a merely "fashionable physician," and that the superior persons in our ranks—probably as common in the 18th as in the 20th century—recognised his worth, or miserably failed to thwart his career. This is the more remarkable when we remember that he lived in a generation when bitter controversies, violent quarrels, scurrilous lampoons, abusive language, and passionate insults were as common in the calm of scientific circles as in the public life of the day.

Lettsom did not seek to escape enmity by fearing to speak out, or by refraining from carrying any project through to a successful end. Yet many of his projects met with violent opposition, abuse, and ridicule, and in his loyalty to them and to his friends he must often have risked damaging his professional career. As a fervent disciple of his friend Edward Jenner he warmly espoused the cause of Vaccination at a time when it was still abused and opposed, with the result that, "in Germany, vaccination had nearly extinguished the small-pox," and "was more general in every part of Europe than in England." (Fig. 8.) Jenner writes to Lettsom: "I

have considered London as the centre of opposition to the Vaccine practice" (Letter 135, November 23rd, 1811). Evidently this British discovery of medicine, in the 18th century, met with the same reception in its native land as did Lister's in surgery, in the 19th century. His support of the Humane Society, his enthusiasm for the improvement of prisons, his divagations into the work of the Philosophical Society, certainly show no self-seeking, did not improve his professional status, encountered strong opposition, and required much courage. His crusade for the Mangel Wurzel, as is seen in Boswell's verses, only exposed him to ridicule. He did not flinch at opposing fashion, or fear to show that he had a frugal mind, when he animadverted upon the practice of wearing the hair powdered, as unnecessarily consuming a vast quantity of flour. He undertook the ungrateful task of exposing quackery. In reference to his attack on the urine-quacks—mentioned in Shakespeare* and still flourishing in the 18th century—Dr. A. Fothergill writes to him:—"Your successful efforts entitle you to the warmest thanks of the public in general, and to the united acknowledgement of the faculty in particular. For you alone undertook the Herculean task, when you ought to have had the joint assistance of the College and every individual in the faculty, in hunting down this many-headed hydra" (Letter 228, October 27th, 1779). Courage could never have failed him, and it must be due to his *sua vis et modo* that he was able to do so much and yet preserve his position and his friends. An instance of this courage in private life is shown by the charming, delicate, and feeling letter he wrote to his friend Boswell, deploring that "in scenes of pleasure which I have cordially enjoyed . . . I have observed, not merely a too frequent use of the glass, but that mixture of liquors which, as a professional man, I can add, tends to injure the best human fabrick" (Letter 219, June 18th, 1791). This effort "to chasten and to moderate the fascinating influence of social pleasure" required courage as well as tact, and was done in such an evidently sincere and friendly way that we are glad to see that Boswell in his reply wrote: "I am not cheerful at present; the visible wearing away of Sir Joshua Reynolds depresses me much; and, besides, I have not been so attentive as I should be to your most friendly recommendations as to regimen. *Spero meliora*" (Letter 220, January 27th, 1792).

* See Annual Oration on "Shakespeare and Medicine," 'Trans. Med. Soc.' vol. xxxix, 1916, p. 279.

FRIENDSHIPS. MARRIED LIFE.

Lettsom apparently had the gift of friendship and the gentle art of not making enemies. He was on good terms with all and sundry in the profession. Although never elected a Fellow, no feeling of

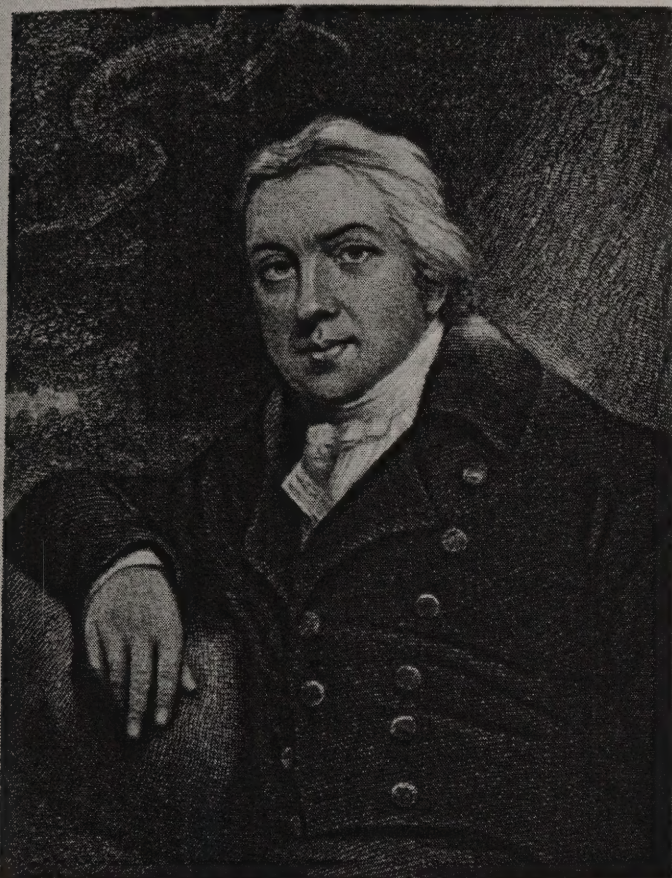


FIG. 8.—Edward Jenner, Fellow of the Medical Society of London. (See page 33.)
(From an engraving by E. S. Scriven, after J. R. Smith).

resentment at having been passed over prevented him from attending the Royal College of Physicians on October 18th, 1813, to hear the Oration by Dr. Williams of Oxford, and dine with the Fellows. The dinner was doubtless in the afternoon—probably

about three o'clock—for he records that he presided the same evening at the Medical Society.

Another of his friendly and sociable meetings with his colleagues shows how cordial were his relations with many of them, and also indicates that already, in 1813, Harley Street had commenced to be a resort of medical men. Thus, under the date of December 3rd, 1813, he writes in his Diary: "Dined with Dr. Latham, Harley Street, with Drs. Maton, Roberts, and Young—Surgeons Sir Everard Horne, Sir William Blizard, and Mr. Clive, constituting a very interesting and agreeable party." On November 20th, 1813, he dined with Mr. Pettigrew in Bolt Colt and "passed a pleasant meeting till very late." He was then nearly seventy years of age, but it is evident that he was full of the *joie de vivre*, ready to please and be pleased, and he seldom refers to a social gathering without commending the "pleasing conviviality" which marked it.

Had Lettsom been as chaste as ice and pure as snow, we know he could not have escaped calumny. It is the more remarkable that his biographer only finds it necessary to defend his memory from two suggestions. One was because, "by those who were ignorant of his true character, he had been accused of a licentious attachment to the fair sex." This slander is treated as an idle story based on an exaggeration of his enthusiastic attachment to womanhood. He loved the company and conversation of enlightened women, and this "may account for an unguardedness of behaviour which subjected him to severe censure—he was imprudent, but certainly not vicious." In his sixty-eighth year Lettsom frankly writes that in the society of young women, "in whom the sympathies and tender passions are most predominant, I have always found my mind humanized and improved, for virtue, innocence, beauty, and feminine chaste manners cannot but prove impressive, and produce a feeling of gratification, that is more than human."* He evidently lived on good terms with his wife, possibly all the more faithfully, as they did not see too much of one another! While he was plunged in his work in London, and living in Sambrook Court, she appears to have passed much of her time at Grove Hill, where "he generally dined on Sundays, and occasionally slept there." This will explain a reference to his wife in one of his letters: "I love her after 14 years' yoking better than in the honeymoon, and, wert thou yoked likewise, I could add

* 'Diary' of January 2nd, 1813.

something, perhaps new, upon the economy of love. Half the unhappy couples I have seen have been among daudlers, who have always been about their wife's apron-strings—not considering that the sweetest honey is loathsome, in its own deliciousness . . . I find that those short intervals of my wife's company affords a higher realism of her society, and makes a volatile Creole, in his nature and essence changeable, more fixed to an object where familiarity has not cloyed, and sentiment has not become insipid" (Letter 11, April 19th, 1783).

The only other charge against Lettsom's character to which his biographer thinks it necessary to reply is that of vanity, and to this he answers: "It is admitted. Where is the individual that could withstand all temptation to vanity, and if he found himself every day, both in public and in private, the theme of an unanimous applause and approbation. There is little or no harm in a modest indulgence of the universal passion, so long as a consciousness of the rectitude of our motives and the uprightness of our conduct preaches self-reproach."

LETTSOM'S VITALITY.

Lettsom's vitality must have been enormous. His diary seldom refers to any bodily weakness; he may be "very much harassed by charitable applications," or "considerably tired by late hours," but we may judge that his ailments were not serious, as he thinks it worth making the pathetic note, "Had my last tooth drawn to-day by Mr. Heath." This was on December 29th, 1813, in his 69th year. Two days later (New Year's Eve) he writes, "At this period, with gratitude to the author of all good, that my state of health is apparently as good as at any period and my professional engagements have exceeded those of the two preceding years. . . ." Although as early as his 39th year he talks of "the buffetings of his slender habit and weak constitution," yet in his 66th year he writes, "I am as alert as in the days of my youth" (Letter 30, May 15th, 1810). Still he is sufficiently anxious at times about his health to write "I fancy immediately upon illness that I am going to the Majority; but," he at once adds, "feeling some little comfort in having done something in the world, which persuades me that I shall meet my predecessors with pleasure, I soon sleep my distempers off." He must have been a sound sleeper, for, as I have already narrated, he

often did not have 20 minutes' leisure in a week; he passed 19 years in London without a single holiday; and from the age of 23 he was "in perpetual exertion" in his profession. As an illustration of his vigour in advanced life, his popularity, his zeal in office, and his wide general interests, I would refer to his association with the Philosophical Society of London. He was admitted a Member on March 10th, 1812 (he was then 68 years of age), and at once took such an active interest in it that in October of the same year he was unanimously chosen President. Although such a busy man he punctually and constantly attended the weekly meetings, and we read that his conduct in the chair, his regulation of the discussion, his useful practical hints, his support of the "juvenile effort" and his "mild conciliatory manners" gave the highest satisfaction. Next year he delivered the Annual Oration and four Lectures on the following subjects: 1. On the Natural History and Medical Qualities of Tea; 2. On the Injurious Effects of Hard Drinking; 3. On the Natural History and Medical Qualities of Coffee; 4. On the Substances which have been used to describe Events and convey Ideas, from the earliest date to the Invention of Paper. In 1814 he gave two lectures on Mind in Travelling and on the Evolution and Improvement of the Mental and Corporal Powers, and, in 1815, the year of his death, he gave two on the Philosophy of Youthful Sports.

DEATH OF LETTSOM.

To such a temperament as Lettsom's death came as he would have wished it—swiftly and mercifully. On October 22nd, 1815—Waterloo year—he assisted at a *post-mortem* examination, remaining for two hours in a cold room. Next day he felt chilly and unwell, but this did not prevent him from writing a long letter to his friend Dr. Dixon, of Whitehaven, in which he discussed a variety of matters and, amongst others, the fact that he was preparing for the press a new edition of his 'Naturalist's Companion.' He added, "I am seventy years of age, and I wish it may be in the dispensation of the Author of all good to lengthen me out another year to effect some literary objects before I emigrate *ad seseles athereas unde negal redire quemquam.*" (Letter 128, October 23rd, 1815.) His wish was not to be granted. On the 25th he wrote a note saying he had had a rigor followed by a dreadful night.

but that he was up and intent on seeing a few patients. He added, "for the last 27 years I have not been confined by illness." Two days later he was urged to see Dr. Babington, but answered "that he should be better in a few days, and that he wished for no one to attend him." His dauntless spirit, in spite of the entreaties of his friends, took him out to see a poor patient in Whitecross Street, but on his return he had to be lifted from his carriage, and that evening took to his bed. Even here, and in spite of excruciating pain which prevented him from turning without assistance, he was eager to get reports on his patients, and to make arrangements to be present at the approaching Anniversary of the Philosophical Society, which he was anxious to attend, provided he was only able to sit up, and even if he had to forego the duty of speaking at it. On the following day, October 30th, he appeared improved—possibly in consequence of the unusual though short rest after 27 years at full speed—but, next day, great debility came on, and he died on Wednesday, November 1st, 1815, between 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning, ten days after performing the *post mortem*, and five days after he had been out to visit his last patient. He was in his 71st year. He had warmed both hands against the fire of life, and, when it sank, we can see that he was ready to depart.

JOHN COAKLEY LETTSOM.

M.D. Leyden, June 29th, 1769.

Fellow of the Royal Society, 1773.

Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians, London, June 25th, 1770.

Member of the Royal College of Physicians, London.

Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, 1770.

Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, 1768.

L.L.D. Cambridge (Mass., U.S.A.).

Physician Extraordinary to the City of London Lying-in Hospital and to the General Hospital, Aldersgate Street.

Official Honours.

- 1786. Hon. Member of the Colchester Medical Society.
- 1788. Hon. Member of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh.
- 1789. Hon. Member of the Agricultural Society of Amsterdam.
- 1789. Hon. Member of the Bath Agricultural Society.
- 1790. Member of the Academy of Arts and Sciences, Montpellier.
- 1790. Hon. Member of the Medical Society, Montpellier.
- 1791. Hon. Member of the Royal Physical Society, Edinburgh.
- 1791. Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh.
- 1791. Corresponding Member of the Medical Society of Bristol.
- 1792. Corresponding Member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, Montpellier.
- 1793. Honorary Member of the Philosophical Society of Newcastle.
- 1796. Hon. Member of the Medical Society of Aberdeen.
- 1813. Hon. Member of the Horticultural Society of Edinburgh.
- Fellow of the Linnean Society.

Honours from America.

- 1788. Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.
- 1789. Fellow of the Medical Societies of New York and Newhaven.
- 1790. Member of the University of Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- L.L.D. University of Cambridge, Mass.
- 1791. Hon. Member of the Massachusetts Humane Society.
- 1792. Hon. Member of the Medical Society, Massachusetts.
- 1792. Member of the Pennsylvanian Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery.
- 1792. Member of the Massachusetts Historical Society.
- 1793. Hon. Member of the Massachusetts Agricultural Society.
- 1795. Corresponding Member of the Historical Society at Boston.
- 1798. Hon. Member and one of the Conservators of the Hospital of New York.
- 1801. Hon. Member of the Humane Society of Philadelphia.
- 1802. Associate of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia.
- 1803. Hon. Member of the Medical Society of Philadelphia.
- 1808. Corresponding Member of the Medical Lyceum of Philadelphia.
- 1813. Hon. Member of the New York Historical Society.

FOUNDATION OF THE MEDICAL SOCIETY.

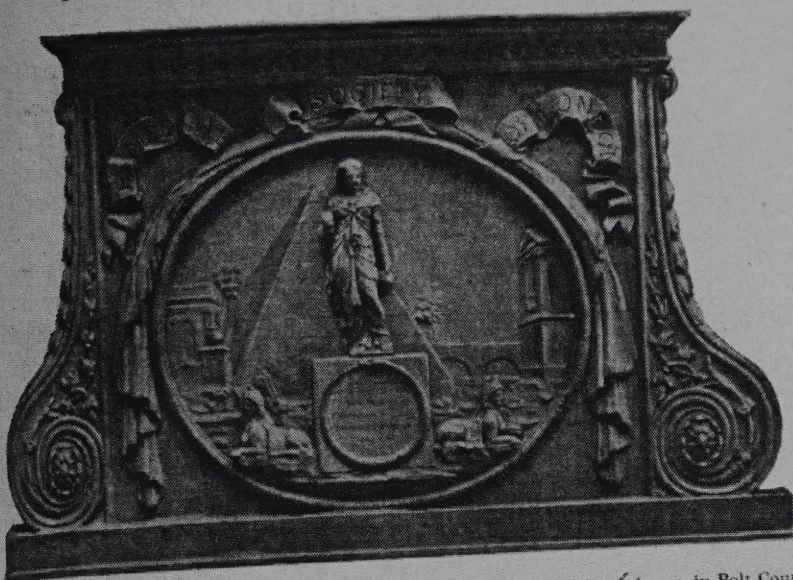


FIG. 9.—Plaque of the Medical Society, which stood over the door of the Society's house in Bolt Court for 128 years (compare Fig. 11), and is now affixed over the mantelpiece in the present home of the Society. (See page 45.)

I have completed this sketch of our Founder's life before describing when and how our Medical Society came into existence, and here I can be brief, as the subject has been well dealt with by Mr. George Bethell in his "Account of the Library of the Medical Society of London," printed in vol. xxxvii of our 'Transactions,' 1914.

Lettsom's multifarious writings were frequently issued in the form of short pamphlets to which he gave the title of 'Hints.' On June 23rd, 1773, he issued a pamphlet entitled 'Hints on the Establishment of a Medical Society of London.' The vigour with which he followed up design by action is shown by the fact that the Society was inaugurated that same year, and the completeness with which he planned his scheme is demonstrated by observing that the "statutes" he drew up in 24 pages are in such order and detail that there will be found but trifling points of difference when we compare them with our present Rules of 145 years later. After an introduction in which he says

that Societies "excite a generous ardour in liberal minds and raise even envy itself into useful emulation" and that "the principal part of our knowledge must be ever derived from comparing our observations with those of others," he points out the advantages of discussion, the usefulness of honorary rewards, and the virtue of a Medical Library. At first the Society was limited to 30 physicians, 30 surgeons, and 30 apothecaries, with a certain number of Honorary and Corresponding Members ('Memoirs of the Medical Society of London,' Vol. I, 1787). We still follow Lettsom's original design in meeting on a Monday, in our Annual Subscription being one guinea, in our method of ballot, the number of our Officers, in the very order of our business, in our two General Meetings annually, in our Annual Oration, and in numerous other details of the Society's regular existence. Naturally, having received the distinction of following the illustrious Lettsom in this honourable Chair, I turned with particular interest to inform myself of his directions to the Presidents of all time. I note that the President "shall regulate all debates, and prevent any from being prosecuted upon trivial subjects," "state and put all questions, according to the intention of the movers"; "summon all extraordinary meetings of the Society, and enforce the execution of their statutes"; "shall have a second vote when the suffrages are equal," and that "all Members shall pay implicit obedience to the President, in the execution of his office." I do not know whether the formal phraseology of our method of initiating a new Fellow was existent before Lettsom's time, but we strictly follow his direction that "the President shall take him by the hand, saying, 'In the name and by the authority of the Medical Society of London, I admit you a Fellow thereof.'" The only one of Lettsom's statutes which we appear to have quite neglected is No. 4, Chapter IV, where it is enacted that "the President, whilst in the Chair, shall be covered, except when addressing himself to the whole Society,"—as he is shown in Fig. 16, p. 54. These 'Hints' as to our foundation are so complete in every detail that they contain one illustration showing our first medal (Fig. 10, p. 43), another of a silhouette engraving of John Fothergill, M.D., to whose memory the Medal is dedicated, and a drawing of the serpent of Æsculapius coiled round an altar.

But not only did Lettsom draw up this remarkably complete design of a Society, and promptly carry it into execution, but he

supplemented it by a liberal gift of several hundred volumes and valuable manuscripts.

The early meetings of the Society were held in Lettsom's house



FIG. 10.—First Medal of the Medical Society of London. (See p. 47).

in Sambrook Court, Basinghall Street, and its first home was in Crane Court, Fleet Street. Here the Medical Society remained until 1788, when Lettsom presented it with the freehold of a house in Bolt Court, Fleet Street, where it was established until 1850 (Fig. 11). It is rare for benefactors to make such handsome gifts during their lifetime; the house in Bolt Court was valued at £2,500. The shifting of the centre of medical life more westward led to our then taking a house in George Street, Hanover Square, and we were finally established in our present house in Chandos Street in 1871.

MEDLEY'S PICTURE.

The fine picture in this room shows a group of the Founders of the Society, the central figure being Lettsom standing up in the act of presenting the deeds of our Bolt Court house to the President (Fig. 16). This oil-painting by Samuel Medley is a valued possession of our Society. Medley, it seems, had been under some obligation to the President, Dr. Sims, and in return for the services rendered to him, painted a portrait of his friend (Fig. 15, p. 50). This was so good a likeness that Sims engaged the artist to paint a meeting of the Society. Medley was the better able to execute this as he was the associate and intimate companion of Lettsom, Sims Babington, Blair, Hooper and Jenner. The painting contains 22 life-like portraits of our Founders, most of them being the



FIG. 11.—The House in Bolt Court, Fleet Street, presented to the Medical Society by John Coakley Lettsom. Note the plaque over the front door. (*Cf.* Fig. 9, p. 41.)

leading medical men of the period. It is doubtful if there exists another medical picture containing so many actual portraits of well-known individuals. Edward Jenner is represented standing

close to the left shoulder of the President. It will be noticed that his figure is smaller than the others, and somewhat out of perspective. This is because Jenner was not one of the original Founders, and did not appear in the picture as originally painted. His portrait, in consideration of his celebrity, was painted in later. This picture was engraved by Nathaniel Branwhite in 1801, and copies of this are still in existence, with Jenner's figure absent. It will be noticed that the President is seated, and, following Lettsom's 'Hints,' he remains covered and is wearing his cocked hat.

THE SOCIETY'S PLAQUE.

We all know the tablet which stands above the mantelpiece in our Library (Fig. 9). It is a bas-relief, beautifully modelled in a clay, on which is stamped "Coade's Lithodipyra," and the date 1787. Inside a carved wooden border is the title "The Medical Society of London"; beneath this is a draped oval, on which an allegorical group is modelled in relief. In the distance, and forming the background, appears the Great Pyramid of Egypt, skirted by palms. In front of this, and in the centre, the principal figure is that of the goddess, the Isis of Saïs, on a pedestal. This goddess is supposed to have been the discoverer of medicine and of the value of drugs. Amongst other functions she presided at births and rocked the cradle of the Nile. In brief, she was Nature. In her left hand she holds a globe and in the right some ears of corn. Crouched on each side of this is a sphinx, emblematic of mystery. A bridge over a river, a temple, a broken column, and an urn on an altar are also represented. On the front of the pedestal is a coiled serpent, representing eternity, and within the circle is the following inscription:—

ΕΓΩ
ΕΙΜΙ ΠΑΝ ΤΟ ΓΕΓΟΝΟΣ
ΚΑΙ ΟΝ, ΚΑΙ ΕΣΟΜΕΝΟΝ,
ΚΑΙ ΤΟΝ ΕΜΟΝ ΠΕΠΛΑΟΝ
ΟΥΔΕΙΣ ΠΩ ΘΝΗΤΩΝ
ΑΠΕΚΑΛΤΥΕΝ,

signifying "I am what ever is, or has been, and will be; and no mortal has hitherto drawn aside the veil."

This identical plaque is the one Lettsom erected over the doorway

of our Society's House in Bolt Court in 1788 (Fig. 11), and there it stood the wind and the rain until our Council removed it last year to its present site in the next room.*

Lettsom must have been much impressed with this emblematic group and with the inscription, for he had an exactly similar tablet erected over the front façade of his house at Camberwell, as we know by a reference to p. 38 of the Rev. Thomas Maurice's descriptive poem "Grove Hill." He also introduced a large and particularly good illustration of it on the title page of his 'Life of Fothergill.' In this latter print the figure of the goddess has both arms intact."†

The house in Bolt Court remained in our possession until the year 1916, when it was disposed of.

THE PRESIDENT'S BADGE.

The President's Badge dates from the year 1901, when it was presented to the Society by Sir William Henry Allchin, M.D., during his Presidency (Fig. 12). It is taken from the obverse of



FIG. 12.—Badge worn by the President of the Medical Society.

the medal illustrated in Lettsom's 'Hints for the Establishment of a Medical Society in London,' written in 1773, and published at p. 257 of Vol. iii of his collected 'Hints' (see Fig. 10, p. 43). In an

* See 'Trans. Med. Soc. London,' vol. xl, 1917, p. xlviii.

† 'Memoirs of John Fothergill, M.D.,' by John Coakley Lettsom. 4th ed. London: Printed by C. Dilly, 1786.

oval is the figure of Hygeia, with the name and date of foundation of the Society below. Above is the motto "Saluti Augustæ," signifying "For the welfare of London." The old Roman name of our city was Londinium, but in the reign of Valentinian the Elder the official name of London was changed to Augusta. This happened A.D. 368, on the occasion of the triumphant entry of General Theodosius, afterwards Emperor, into London (Sir Arthur Evans, 'Proc. Soc. Antiq.' 1915, Vol. xxvii, p. 105).

Londini Saluti is the form in which the inscription appears on the crest imprinted on the title page of our 'Transactions.*'

THE MEDALS OF THE SOCIETY.

In Lettsom's 'Hints for the Establishment of a Medical Society in London,' written in 1773, there is a plate illustrating the two sides of a medal, with the title "Prize Medal of the Medical Society of London." This doubtless was the first design of the Fothergillian Gold Medal, valued ten guineas. But, in 1784, it was decided that this medal should bear the head of Dr. John Fothergill on one side, and, on the reverse, a civic wreath; hence we may look on the medal illustrated in Lettsom's Hints rather as a foundation, or commemoration, medal. It is curious that the Society has never possessed a copy of this medal until the present session, when, through the interest of my friend, Dr. Raymond Crawford, one was discovered, wrongly catalogued, amidst a job lot of medals at one of the Red Cross sales at Christie's auction rooms. The Registrar, Mr. Bethell, not only had the good fortune to secure the medal, but also the generosity to present it as a gift to the Society. It is engraved by John Kirk.

The obverse of the medal, as already described, is almost identical with the President's Badge. We have not been able to discover why the bust of Queen Caroline should appear on the reverse.

The Fothergillian Medal, "in gold of ten guineas value," was founded by Lettsom in a letter addressed to the Fellows of the Society on May 25th, 1784. This medal was afterwards permanently endowed by Dr. Anthony Fothergill, who left £500 to the Society for that purpose. This Dr. Fothergill was not related to

* 'Trans. Med. Soc. London,' vol. xxxix, 1916, p. xlviii.

his namesake, Lettsom's friend and protector, on the anniversary of whose birthday (March 8th, 1712), the medal is adjudicated.*



FIG. 13.—John Fothergill Medal.

In 1791 Lettsom himself won the prize essay for the Fothergillian Gold Medal with a thesis in reply to the question, "What are the Diseases more prevalent in great Towns? and what are the bes

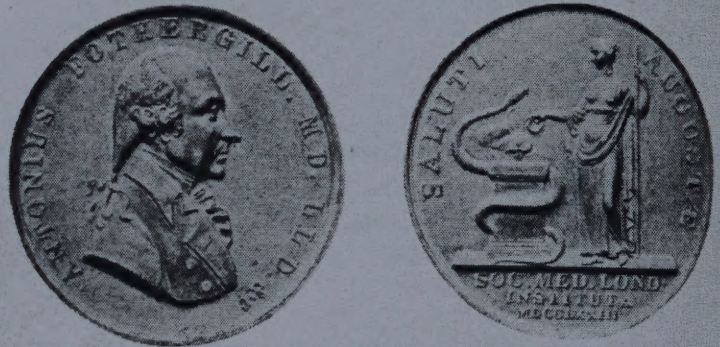


FIG. 14.—Anthony Fothergill Medal.

means of obviating them? and the history of Epidemics for at least one year?" He delivered the Annual Oration in 1778, choosing as a subject 'History of the Origin of Medicine.' This was reprinted at the request of the Society, and the quarto volume of 170 pages, which I here exhibit with illustrations, copious foot-notes from

* "A Note on the Fothergillian Medals of the Medical Society of London," by John Langton and George Bethell, 'Trans. Med. Soc. London,' vol. xxviii, 1905, p. 336.

100 authors, and an index, will demonstrate the reading and research he must have devoted to this difficult subject.* He said he had to deliver this Oration at short notice, but was able to effect it by the facility with which he could refer to his 40,000 notes! How did he manage it in those days before card-filing systems were invented?† This History was so appreciated that it was translated and published in French in 1787. On March 8th, 1804, he again delivered the Annual Oration, "On the Origin of Vaccine Inoculation with a Biographical account of Dr. Jenner," to whom the Fothergillian Gold Medal was then presented.

EARLY DAYS OF THE SOCIETY.

So the Medical Society was founded, and I would refer those interested in its early years to consult the article by Mr. Bethell and the Oration on the subject of "The Old Founders and the New Honorary Fellows," delivered by Dr. E. Symes Thompson on May 1st, 1882. It would appear that these years were not free from anxieties, caused chiefly by petty jealousies leading to financial difficulties. Thus, the first year's income was only £73: it fell later to £22; and in the year the Bolt Court premises were presented (1788) it reached £418. Compare this with our income of £1,587 6s. 1d. in 1915. In 1800 a number of books were bought from the President, Dr. James Sims, for the large sum of £500, the Society also engaging to pay an annuity of £30 to Dr. Sims and his wife. This Dr. Sims was a native of County Down (Fig. 15). He probably had the political talent which Irishmen appear to develop when they leave the Emerald Isle, for he managed to be re-elected President for a period of 22 consecutive years, i.e. from 1786 to 1809. Medley's painting shows him in the Presidential Chair, and the portrait of the good-humoured, pleasant

* Reviewing this Oration, the 'Monthly Catalogue' for July, 1779, writes: "Our Medical Historian has rendered his oration equally instructive and amusing, by numerous anecdotes and quotations, in the form of notes; and by a still more numerous list of references, which evince an immense share of multifarious reading, well digested and applied."

† My friend, Mr. J. Y. W. MacAlister, the Secretary of the Royal Society of Medicine, writes to me that card indexes were designed and used long before our American cousins brought them to our notice. The original cards, in the handwriting of the French abbé who invented them, are still in use in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (*circa* ? 1740).

and sagacious face looking out below his cocked hat agrees with what we know of his character. (Fig. 16, p. 54.) His constant reelection, indeed, proved unfortunate for the Society, and led to the secession of a number of influential Fellows and the formation in

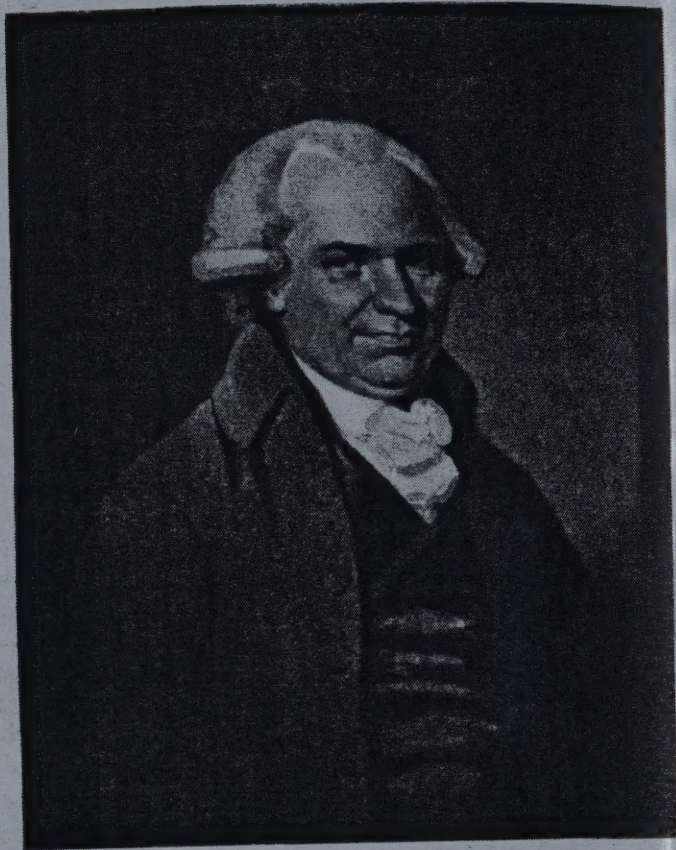


FIG. 15.—Dr. James Sims, President of the Medical Society of London for 22 years, viz., 1786–1808. See p. 55.

(From an engraving by N. Branwhite, after a picture by S. Modley.)

1805 of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, the predecessor of the Royal Society of Medicine. However, Dr. Lettsom—who had already been President in 1775—broke down Dr. Sims' retention of the Chair and was again President both in 1809 and 1813.

In 1850 the Society perpetuated the name of our Founder by establishing the Lettsomian Lectures.

THE SOCIETY'S 'TRANSACTIONS.' WAR RECORDS.

The published records of the Society's work appeared under the title of 'Memoirs' or 'Proceedings,' and, later on, under the present one of 'Transactions.' We find they exist from 1787 to 1805, and from 1810 to 1817, but between these two periods there is a hiatus. Subsequently there appeared only one volume in 1846 and another in 1861. The publication of the 'Transactions' was resumed in 1872, and they have appeared annually ever since.

To the 'Memoirs' and 'Transactions' of our Society Lettsom made no less than 27 contributions ('Life,' vol. i, p. 136).

As our 'Transactions' covered the period of the Peninsula and Waterloo campaigns, I looked through them to see in what way they reflected the military medicine and surgery of the period. I confess to considerable surprise in not finding a single communication referring to the wars in which our country was then engaged. This is striking when we remember that, in the Session of 1915-16, every single communication made to the Society was on a war subject, with the one exception of the Annual Oration by myself on "Shakespeare and Medicine." But it is also noticeable that the Boer War is reflected in our "Transactions" by one solitary communication on 'Typhoid Fever.' This shows that our previous wars have been of the nation's life a thing apart—the present world war embraces our whole existence.

RECORDS OF THE DEATHS OF SHAKESPEARE AND NELSON.

I had occasion last year in "Shakespeare and Medicine," to point out that our Society possesses the only record of the nature of the death of our national poet.* It is curious that we also possess a record of the death wound of our national hero, Nelson. The Minute Book of the Medical Society for December 23rd, 1815, contains the following,—“A letter was read by Dr. Gillespie from the surgeon on board 'The Victory,' who dissected the wound of the late Admiral Nelson, describing the progress of the musket ball. It passed through the left shoulder, penetrating one lobe of the lung,

* "Shakespeare and Medicine," by Sir StClair Thomson, 'Trans. Med. Soc.,' vol. xxxix, p. 258 (1916).

and, after perforating the vertebræ, was lodged in the surrounding muscles."

Surgeon W. Beatty (afterwards Sir William Beatty) was the surgeon on board H.M.S. "Victory" and subsequently in 1807 he published a book with the title 'Authentic Narrative of the Death of Lord Nelson, with the Circumstances Preceding, Attending and Subsequent to that Event. The Professional Report of his Lordship's Wound, and Several Interesting Anecdotes.'

THE LATIN FORM OF NOMINATION.

In our early days, Latin was the official language of the Society. We are fortunate in possessing a copy of the form of nomination in use at the end of the 18th century. It is dated 1789, and is addressed to Mr. William Vyse, Surgeon, at Spalding in Lincolnshire, and has been presented to us by that gentleman's great-grandson, Dr. Christopher Vise, of Tunbridge Wells, now serving with the Army. He represents the sixth generation of medical men in one family, is one of our Fellows, and is present here this evening. The Latin form is printed, and the translation accompanying it is in the handwriting of William Chamberlain, the celebrated obstetrician whose name is well known in connection with the invention of midwifery forceps.*

*

"Viro Celeberrimo Guilielmo Vyse, Chirurgo Præses

"et Societas Medica Londinensis, S.P.D.

"Nominis Tui fama, tot ac tanta, quæ in Arte nostra illustranda, promovenda, amplificanda edidisti specimina, nos impulerunt, ut in sociorum exterorum, quos Correspondentes vocant, numerum Te adscriberemus; id quod die Lunæ, tertio Augusti, 1789, factum esse præsentis testantur litteræ. Quare benigno accipe animo hoc amicitie et reverentiæ nostræ erga Te testimonium atque pro benevolentia Tua, ea, quæ ad artis incrementum aliquid conferunt, nobiscum communica. Vale ac nobis fave

"GULIELMUS CHAMBERLAINE,

"ad epistolis ad externos.

"Londini,

"Ex ædibus Societatis,

"Bolt Court, Fleet Street.

"Die Martis, 4to Augusti, 1789."

Translation.

"The President and Members of the Medical Society in London wish much health to the most renowned William Vyse, Surgeon.

"The greatness of your reputation, in so many and great instances, which you have given in illustrating, promoting and enlarging our art, have induced

CONCLUSION.

The rest of the chronicles of the Medical Society, and all that it has done, are they not written in the handsome volumes of the 'Transactions'—a storehouse of interest and instruction to all our members? In this sketch of our Founder I hope I have succeeded in strengthening the loyalty of all Fellows to the oldest Medical Society in London, and in conveying to your minds the attractive picture of the character of our Founder which I have received from a perusal of his life and letters. It is well summarised by his biographer, who describes Dr. John Coakley Lettsom as "good, humane, benevolent. Though himself not learned in the highest acceptance of the term he was the friend and the patron of learning." "I have lost in him the sensible, firm and upright friend, the able, honest and experienced physician, and the pleasing, instructive companion of a social hour." Our Society need seek for no better exemplar.

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us, to admit you into the number of our absent Members, whom we call Correspondents; which this present Letter testifies was done on Monday, the 3d of August, 1789. Wherefore receive kindly this testimony of our friendship and regard for you, and out of your good will communicate to us any occurrences that conduce to the improvement of the Art. Farewell and think well of us.

"GULIELMUS CHAMBERLAINE.

"London,

"Bolt Court, Fleet Street,

"Tuesday, 4th of Aug., 1789."

APPENDIX.

THE FOUNDERS OF THE MEDICAL SOCIETY OF
LONDON, 1773.

(From the painting by Samuel Medley.)*

For many of the biographical notes of the 22 medical worthies whose portraits appear in this valuable picture, I am indebted to the Annual Oration delivered before the Society by Dr. E. Symes Thompson on May 1st, 1882. (See Fig. 16.)

1. Dr. JOHN COAKLEY LETTSOM is seen standing to address the Fellows. He may be in the act of presenting the lease of his house in Bolt Court to the Society (Fig. 11, p. 44), or he may be giving the record of the life of Dr. John Fothergill, to whom he was so much attached, or he might be delivering the Oration, which he did both in 1778 and again in 1804. If it represents him in the first year of the Society's existence, he would then be 29 years of age. It will be noticed that he wears a bob-wig, unpowdered, that his clothes are of sober cut, and his stockings of plain style and material.

2. The handsome figure seated on Lettsom's left hand is that of Sir JOHN HAYES (1750-1809), whose white silk stockings form so prominent a feature in the forefront of the picture. He was a person whom Medley, the artist, used to speak of as "the most finished courtier of his acquaintance." Born at Limerick, he graduated at Rheims. Then he distinguished himself as an army surgeon, and became Physician to the Forces and L.R.C.P. in

* The artist, Samuel Medley, was born in 1769 and died in 1857. He was the son of the celebrated Baptist minister, Samuel Medley, and became a painter of religious and historical subjects. Subsequently he took up portraiture, in which department of his art he obtained considerable reputation. His health suffered from his sedentary work and he therefore gave up art, in 1805, and took to the Stock Exchange. At the latter occupation he was successful and made a large fortune. Medley was an active man outside his professional occupations, and he is known as one of the Founders of University College, London. His eldest daughter married Henry Thompson and became the mother of the late Sir Henry Thompson, F.R.C.S., well known as an artist and exhibitor at the Royal Academy, in addition to being Surgeon to University College Hospital. He resided the latter part of his life at Chatham and died there.

(To face p. 54.)



FIG. 16.—The Founders of the Medical Society of London.
(From the painting by Samuel Medley in the Society's house.)

A.D. 1773.



1784. In 1791 he was appointed Physician Extraordinary to the Prince of Wales, and in the following year Physician to the Westminster Hospital. He was created a baronet when 47 years of age, and died 12 years after of acute laryngitis. In St. James' Church, Piccadilly, under the north gallery, there is a small mural tablet to his memory. Letters and despatches from Sir Ralph Abercromby, Lord Moira, Lord Southampton, Mr. Huskisson, and others, now in the possession of the family, show how much the success of the Havannah campaign was due to the untiring devotion, skill, and energy of Sir John (then Dr.) Hayes.

3. Dr. JAMES SIMS (1741-1820) is rightly represented in the Presidential Chair, for he possessed to an extraordinary degree the power of ruling the elections of the Society, and managed to be re-elected President during a period of 22 years (Fig. 15, p. 50). His constant re-election, indeed, proved unfortunate for the Society, and led to the secession of a number of influential Fellows, and the formation in 1805 of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, which, in 1907, became merged in the Royal Society of Medicine. Dr. Sims was born in County Down in 1741, attended the metropolitan hospitals, and studied at Edinburgh, but, like many of his contemporaries, took his degree at Leyden. His success in practice as an accoucheur was greatly due to the recommendations of Lettsom, with whom he established the Royal Humane Society. He was Physician to the Aldersgate and Surrey Dispensaries, and wrote much, as our 'Transactions' testify. For instance, one day he recorded a rare case of abscess above the clavicle, communicating with the lung, so as to blow out a candle. His chief writings are 'Observations on Epidemic Disorders, with Remarks on Nervous and Malignant Fevers,' a 'Discourse on the Best Method of Prosecuting Medical Inquiries,' and 'The Principles and Practice of Midwifery.' He drew attention to the value of nitrate of silver in epilepsy and chorea, giving it in doses of gr. $\frac{1}{3}$, but stated that he had heard of a physician in town who gave it to the extent of 18 grains a day. In 1795 he spoke of the value of arsenic in intermittent fever, and of elaterium in dropsy. He was a good-humoured, pleasant man, as his sagacious face would suggest, full of anecdote, an ample reservoir of good things, and for figures and facts a perfect chronicle of other times. He had a most retentive memory, but, when that failed, he referred to a compendium of knowledge in the shape of a pocket-book, from which he quoted

with oracular authority. In the first year of the century our Society purchased from Dr. Sims a large number of books for the sum of £500, and engaged to pay an annuity of £30 to Dr. Sims, and afterwards to his widow, should he pre-decease her. Probably no medical society ever expended so large a sum at one time in the purchase of books from a private library.

4. Dr. THOMAS BRADLEY (1751-1813), being deaf, placed himself as near to the President as possible, and is shown standing on his right in his accustomed attitude, with a hand behind the ear so as to concentrate the sound. He was born in Worcestershire, and there for years conducted a school where mathematics—in which he was proficient—were specially taught. Retiring from scholastic life he took his degree at Edinburgh, settled in London, and became Physician to the Westminster Hospital. He was for years the editor of the 'Medical and Physical Journal.' His deafness, his retiring habits and scholarly life, unfitted him for metropolitan practice, to which he proved unequal rather from diffidence than from lack of professional knowledge. He always hesitated in drawing conclusions from uncertain premises, and appeared to little advantage in the sick room.

5. Immediately behind Dr. Thomas Bradley stands JAMES WARE, F.R.S. (1756-1815). We are reminded of his interest in ophthalmic surgery by his gold-rimmed spectacles. He was celebrated for extracting cataract with a success that, it is said, had rarely been equalled. He wrote several works on ophthalmology, and founded the School for the Indigent Blind.

6. EDWARD NATHANIEL BANCROFT, M.D., F.R.S. (1772-1842), is at the extreme left in the picture of the three figures standing on the President's right hand. Born in London in 1772, he graduated Bachelor of Medicine, Cambridge, in 1794. In the following year he was appointed Physician to the Army and, in this capacity, served in the Windward Islands, in Portugal, the Mediterranean, and Egypt. Returning to London in 1804, he qualified as Doctor of Medicine, and was elected F.R.C.P. Lond. in 1806. He was censor in 1806. He was elected Physician to St. George's Hospital in 1808, but retired, owing to ill-health, in 1811, and proceeded to Jamaica as Physician to the Forces. Dr. Bancroft died there in 1842. He was the author of a number of works on Yellow Fever, the 'Philosophy of Permanent Colours,' and was an authority on botany and natural history. He wrote upon the subject of the

'Medical Department of the Army,' complaining of the distinction between the physician to the forces and army surgeon. He was a strong opponent of the theory of spontaneous generation of diseases.

7. Dr. JOSEPH HART MYERS (1758-1823), the Librarian, is seated to the extreme left of the picture. Born of Jewish parents in New York, he was sent to London at an early age, and commenced his medical studies by attendance at the lectures of William Hunter and Dr. George Fordyce. From London he went to Edinburgh, where he took his M.D. in 1779. Elected L.R.C.P. Lond. in 1787, he settled in London, and was appointed Physician to the Portuguese Hospital and the General Dispensary. He died June 1st, 1825.

8. The thoughtful, earnest face of Dr. WILLIAM WOODVILLE (1752-1805), whose peruke is well shown in the picture, calls for a few words. He is seated, with his legs crossed, on the left side of the picture below Dr. Myers, but nearer the spectator. Born at Cocker-mouth in 1752, he took his M.D. degree in Edinburgh in 1775, and first practised in his native county of Cumberland. He settled in London, 1784, and was elected Physician to the Smallpox and Inoculation Hospitals. He was an accomplished botanist, and in the gardens of the Smallpox Hospital near King's Cross, two acres in extent, he cultivated his hobby, and worked up with artistic accuracy the illustration for his work on 'Medical Botany,' published in four quarto volumes in 1790-94. He has left us valuable works on smallpox, but his great botanical work is still consulted with profit and pleasure. William Woodville was Secretary of the Medical Society in 1784, when Lettsom established the gold medal as a memorial of Dr. Fothergill, to be given on his birthday (March 8th). His letter acknowledging the gift is printed at the end of Lettsom's life of Fothergill. At first Woodville was vigorously opposed to Jenner's great discovery of vaccination, but the opportunity afforded by the Medical Society to bring them together was used by Jenner to argue and remonstrate with him. The discussion appears to have been conducted with much heat. Both, however, were equally engaged in seeking after truth, and our Society was the meeting ground which enabled Jenner to convert Woodville from a strong opponent to an active supporter. He vaccinated multitudes of people, some thousands of whom he afterwards tested by variolous inoculation, and thus gave the

public a confidence in vaccination which could not otherwise have been attained. Dr. Woodville cultivated the society of his professional friends, by whom he was much esteemed. He died of dropsy in March, 1805, and, being a Quaker, was buried in the same Friends' burial ground as our founder Lettsom. John Bunyan and other nonconformists are buried near by, at Bunhill Fields.

9. Dr. NATHANIEL HULME (1732-1807), who sits next Dr. Woodville, was a vigorous Yorkshireman, who took the M.D. Edinburgh in 1765, at the age of 33, and was appointed Physician to the Charterhouse and L.R.C.P. in 1774. He was also an F.R.S. He died at the age of 75 from a fall from the top of his staircase to the basement. He wrote works on the prevention of scurvy, recommending lime-juice, a remedy which, he stated, had been known since the sixteenth century. He also wrote on puerperal fever, on gout and stone. The epitaph in Charterhouse Church states that "he practised medicine during a long course of years with advantage to his patients and honour to himself."

10. Dr. SAYER WALKER (1748-1826), who sits immediately behind the white-stockinged figure of Sir John Hayes, was a colleague of Dr. Hulme, at the London Lying-in Hospital. He was at first a Presbyterian Minister at Enfield, then, when 44 years of age, took the Aberdeen M.D. and, after 20 years of obstetric practice, retired to Clapton and died in 1828. He wrote treatises on 'Nervous Diseases' and on the 'Diseases of Women.' He was the first to give turpentine in Tænia, and stated at a meeting of this Society that it had proved successful in his hands in 90 cases.

11. EDWARD JENNER (1749-1823) stands immediately on the President's left (compare Fig. 8, p. 35). It is interesting to notice that this portrait was absent from the original picture when first engraved. After Jenner's grand discoveries (in 1796) had received the acknowledgement of the Society, and he had been elected to the Fellowship, it was thought right to add the portrait of one so distinguished to the existing picture. This was accordingly done, but copies of the engraving by Branwhite are still in existence, in which Jenner's figure is absent. It will be noticed that he is put in the background, and that his figure is on a somewhat smaller scale than the others. From the very first year of our Society's existence, when Dr. Lettsom read a paper on "Inoculation," that subject held a prominent place. In 1801, Dr. Jenner was himself present on several successive evenings, when cow-pox occupied the attention of the Fellows.

Jenner had been a Corresponding Fellow for 12 years, when in 1802 he was elected an ordinary Fellow; and in the following year the value of his discovery to the world was expressed in a highly appreciative memorial drawn up by the Society.

It would be of interest, while speaking of Jenner, to give an account of vaccination, and the important function our Society fulfilled in affording an opportunity for full and frequent discussion in every stage of the controversy; but this has been done with great care and completeness by Dr. Cholmeley. The reproach of having undervalued, or having been slow to appreciate the value of Jenner's work, cannot be passed upon our Founders; although the tardy recognition of it by the Houses of Parliament, who voted him only £10,000, and years after £20,000 more, may, by the light of subsequent events, deserve that reproach.

12. Dr. ROBERT HOOPER (1773-1835), as Secretary, sits at the President's left hand. He was M.D. of St. Andrews, and practised in Savile Row. From time to time he brought many interesting cases before the Society. He mentioned that of a man who had a pitchfork driven into his head for 4 inches and speedily got well; and of another person who quickly recovered after having nearly half his cranium taken off in the riots of 1780. He wrote on Intestinal Worms, and edited a medical directory.

13. Mr. EDWARD FORD (1746-1809) who sits next but one to the President's left hand, read a paper in November, 1779, on "Loss of Voice Cured by Electricity." This method of treatment was taken up by Dr. Hooper, who, in 1783, and again in 1787, reported cases of periodic headache cured by electricity, with particulars of animal magnetism. He wrote a valuable work on diseases of the hip-joint.

14. Of the four who sit in the back row, to the right of the picture, the one nearest to Lettsom is Dr. JOHN HAIGHTON (1755-1823). He was an accomplished anatomist, physiologist, physician, and accoucheur. His knowledge of the physiology and diseases of the uterus was so superior that he gave this part of Mr. Cline's anatomical lectures by the latter's particular desire. He was one of those practitioners who were prosecuted by the Royal College of Physicians for exercising his art without a licence. Dr. Haighton's defence was that he would willingly submit to the strictest examination and pay the fees, but that he refused to withdraw from practice, reside for two years at a university, and attend lectures delivered by men much his inferior in every department of

medicine. He began life as a surgeon in the Guards, then became Demonstrator of Anatomy in the Borough School of Medicine and Lecturer on Physiology, and for many years he was regarded as the ablest teacher of midwifery in Europe. He was physician to the Eastern Dispensary for some years, until obliged to relinquish it on account of the extent of his practice. His manners were abrupt, and his temper petulant, and to this his friends attributed the fact that he never entered the state of matrimony. He suffered from chronic laryngitis, and published a series of experiments on the laryngeal and recurrent branches of the eighth pair of nerves; also experimental inquiries on the reproduction of nerves and on animal impregnation. His papers in the early volumes of the 'Transactions' of our Society, viz., three on "The Causes of Vomiting," are full of original ideas, and the freshness and vivacity of their arrangement is quite what might be expected from a man having the alert—not to say "wide-awake"—look which the artist Medley has so skilfully rendered in the picture.

15. Dr. R. J. THORNTON (1768–1837) sits second in the back row to the right, resting his chin on his hand. He took an active part in promoting Jenner's views. He wrote 'A Vindication of Small-pox,' and a work in five volumes on 'The Philosophy of Medicine.' His best known works are his 'Practical Botany' and 'British Flora.' His face is one of remarkable intelligence. In October, 1806, he related before the Society a case in which he showed much vigour and fertility. He was called to a man who had hung himself with a silk pocket-handkerchief. The doctor applied a common bellows to one nostril, thus filling his lungs with air. Then he applied boiling water to the stomach, which immediately produced a convulsive groan and gasp. Mustard was then applied to the nostrils and a cataplasm to the feet, then a blister to the thorax, and after that leeches. The patient recovered and had suffered no pain!

16. Next to him is seated Mr. JOHN SHADWELL.

17. Dr. JOHN AIKEN (1747–1822) sits on the extreme right of the picture. His face is certainly a remarkable one. His wig, it will be noticed, is innocent of powder. He was little fitted by temper or habit for the fatigue and struggle necessary for success in town and he willingly and wisely followed the bent of his disposition, and devoted himself to literary pursuits. He settled at first at Chester, next at Warrington, and afterwards at Yarmouth, but, while there, being an ardent Dissenter (son of a Dissenting

Minister), he took an active part in the political agitation connected with the repeal of the Test Act, and was so opposed by the clergy, with whom he had previously been popular, that he found it wise to move to London. His medical works were not so large or numerous as his general ones, *e.g.*, 'Evenings at Home,' the 'General Bibliographical Dictionary,' 'Monthly Magazine,' 'The Annual Register,' etc. He was the biographer of Howard, the philanthropist, and saw much of him at Warrington. Dr. Aiken, as well as Lettsom, acted in concert with Howard in ameliorating the condition of prisons.

18. Mr. WILLIAM BLAIR (1766-1822), who stands behind Lettsom, to the right of the picture, with the celebrated Dr. Babington at his side, has a classical profile and a look of alertness befitting so distinguished an operator. He was Surgeon to the Lock Hospital as well as to the Finsbury and Bloomsbury Dispensaries. He brought a case before the Society in which, a piece of meat having stuck in a person's throat, he used probangs without effect; but, by injecting tobacco into the bowel, he induced vomiting and thus removed the obstacle. In another case he performed œsophagotomy with success. In 1805 he gave details of a rare case of hernia in which ascitic fluid escaped through a puncture in the tunica vaginalis. He edited with others a 'System of Surgery,' and also edited the 'London Medical Review and Magazine.'

19. Dr. WILLIAM BABINGTON (1756-1833) stands behind Lettsom, the nearest figure to the top right hand corner of the picture. He was born and educated in Ireland, but completed his professional course at Guy's, and was early appointed on the staff of the Haslar Hospital. Being called upon to attend the prisoners of war at Winchester he caught jail fever, and narrowly escaped with his life. After five years of military work he became Apothecary to Guy's and Lecturer on Chemistry, and under the advice of Dr. Saunders (who sits in the arm-chair nearer the spectator) he took the Edinburgh M.D. degree, and in the same year was elected Physician to Guy's. His progress as a physician was rapid, and he very soon had an extensive city practice, so much so that in 1811 he was compelled to resign his hospital appointments. For many years Dr. Babington was the acknowledged head of the profession in the city. He was universally beloved and respected. Dr. Gooch wrote of him as a "man who, to the cultivation of modern sciences, adds the simplicity of ancient manners; whose eminent reputation and rare

benevolence of heart have long shed a graceful lustre over the profession which looks up to him with a mingled feeling of respect, confidence and regard." He died in Devonshire Street in 1833, aged 77, of influenza. His statue was erected in St. Paul's Cathedral by public subscription. The inscription on this monument is by the pen of Dr. Paris, the President of the Royal College of Physicians. Dr. Babington was a Fellow of the Royal Society, and one of the founders of the Geological and Hunterian Societies, and was one of the best mineralogists of his time.

The name of Babington is of particular interest to myself, in common with all who practise laryngology, for his son came near to inventing the laryngoscope. In the year 1829 Dr. Benjamin Guy Babington showed his "glottiscope" to the Hunterian Society of London.* This consisted of a laryngeal mirror, very similar to those used at the present day, on which he concentrated the sun's rays by means of a common hand looking-glass. There are no cases recorded in which Babington's glottiscope was employed, although he used it on many patients, and a method which depended on so uncertain a luminary as the sun—at least, in this climate—could not be expected to secure any general adoption. Another objection was that it demanded the use of the operator's two hands, the right one holding the laryngeal mirror, while the left manipulated the hand-glass. Still, in realising that the one mirror would suffice for reflecting light downwards into the larynx, and also for receiving the image of the parts thus illuminated, Babington made a great advance on all previous efforts in this direction, and thus, by 26 years, he anticipated Garcia's invention of the laryngoscope in 1855.†

20. Close behind Lettsom, seated in the lower row, we see R. CHARLES COMBE (1743–1817), who was educated at Harrow, and secured the friendship of Dr. William Hunter. He practised as an obstetric physician, being elected to the British Lying-in Hospital in 1789. His attainments as a scholar and antiquary, and his taste in numismatics, were generally known and appreciated. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1776, and, amongst other

* 'The Use of the Laryngoscope,' by Morell Mackenzie, M.D. 3rd Edition, 1871. London: Longmans, Green and Co., p. 12.

† StClair Thomson, "The History of the Laryngoscope," 'The Laryngoscope,' xv, March, 1905, p. 177; Wilks and Bettany, 'History of Guy's Hospital,' London, 1892, p. 235.

works, he brought out, conjointly with Mr. Homer, Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, a splendid edition of 'Horace' in two volumes, and said to contain the best index to the works of Horace which has ever appeared. He died at his house in Vernon Place, and was buried in Bloomsbury Cemetery, Brunswick Square.

21. Next to Coombe is JOHN RELPH. He was entered on the physic line at Leyden, in March, 1778, and graduated M.D. there in the same year. He became L.R.C.P. in 1784, and Physician to Guy's, 1789. He wrote a work on "Peruvian Bark," and died in Mark Lane in 1804.

22. Dr. WILLIAM SAUNDERS (1743-1817), who sits in the arm-chair near the right-hand corner of the picture, the last of the 22 Founders, was physician to the Middlesex and afterwards to St. Thomas's Hospital. Like Relph, who was from Cumberland, Saunders was a north countryman. He served his apprenticeship at Penrith, and was then a pupil at St. Thomas's. He became an army surgeon, and, when peace was established, he settled at Penrith and took the M.D. of Aberdeen. He went again with the regiment to Minorca, and, while quartered in Edinburgh, attended medical lectures there. He then went to America and was promoted to the rank of physician to the army, which he served with great credit to himself and benefit to the troops. After the successful expedition against Havannah he returned home with broken health. He, however, regained strength during a tour in France and Italy. Dr. William Saunders became L.R.C.P. in 1765 and settled in practice in London, and, in the following year, was appointed physician to the Middlesex and, in 1768, to St. Thomas's Hospital. When 51 years of age he married an heiress and gave up his hospital appointments to Dr. Reynolds, of Guildford. Three years later his wife died, and his own health broke down, but he did not relinquish practice altogether. He was elected F.R.C.S. in 1784. He left two daughters. The elder became Viscountess Melville and the younger Countess of Westmoreland.

